THE FOUR PILLARS OF ISLAM

by

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Translated into English by

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FOREWORD

In the name of Allah, the Most Benevolent, the Most Merciful

In these pages the underlying significance and aims and virtues of the four fundamental duties in Islam, *Salat* (Regular Worship), *Zakat* (Poor-due), *Saum* (Fasting) and *Haj* (Pilgrimage have been discussed. Their correct place in the Islamic *Shariat*, their proper legal position, their precise worth and importance in the religious structure and the individual and collective spheres of existence have been explained at length and such of their secrets and purposes set forth as are proved from the Quran and the Traditions and have been deduced faithfully from the original sources by distinguished Muslim legists and scholars of the earliest phase. These eminent men of piety and learning were not influenced by imported doctrines or other moral and intellectual concepts of their age. They refrained from judging about the nature and significance of the primary modes of Islamic worship on the basis of contemporary political philosophy or social and economic systems.

For writing the present volume I have studied afresh the Quran, re-examined the authentic and irrefutable Traditions and read all that has been written on the subject. In this, the works of the doctors of Islamic Jurisprudence have been of the greatest help who were blessed by the Almighty Creator with a correct understanding of the faith and had reached its innermost depths without getting involved unnecessary hair-splitting and speculation. The same method was adopted by them for interpreting and elucidating the objectives of the *Shariat*, the secrets of the holy Quran and the spirit and implications of the sacred Injunctions as was the hall-mark of the earliest Muslims to whom the Divine Guidance was directly addressed and in whose language the Quran had been revealed. They not only possessed a keen insight into religious affairs but were also

known for right conduct. They were the embodiments of knowledge and erudition, they emulated the example of the holy Prophet at each step, and exerted themselves unsparingly in the domains of thought and action. God, consequently, had opened all channels of guidance to them and made easy for them what was difficult.

> And for those who strive in Us, We surely guide them to Our paths, and lo! Allah is with the good.
>
> (—xxix : 69)

The spirit of these fundamental duties had permeated through their whole existence while they, on their part, had entered into the heart of knowledge concerning them and gained a complete mastery over it without which it was not possible to unravel their mysteries. They had followed religion with single minded devotion and were distinguished by a thorough understanding of it. As a result, they could authoritatively explain the meaning of *The Four Pillars of Islam* and dwell upon the whole range of their implications.

Hazrat Shah Waliullah's well-known treatise *Hujjat-ullah-al Baligha* has proved to be extremely useful in my work. Decidedly it is the most meritorious contribution on the subject and I have drawn freely on it. The pith and substance of what Shah Waliullah has written in respect of the four fundamental duties has been incorporated in the present volume.

First of all, I have kept in mind the Quran and the Traditions and carefully examined what is contained in them about the modes of Islamic worship. After these primary sources of knowledge, I have benefitted from the commentaries of the relevant Quranic Texts and Prophet's Traditions furnished by renowned Muslim scholars. And, lastly, no harm has been felt in presenting the results of my own study and understanding of the subject, as granted to me by the Lord out of His Infinite Mercy. In the same way, I have also made use of the writings of some latter day authorities and contemporary men of learning.

With all this, care has been taken to maintain a uniform

literary standard and employ a mode of expression that was not lacking in clarity and vividness. To the best of my ability I have not allowed the readability of the book to suffer from the frequency of quotations from the Quran, the Traditions and other works of merit and originality.

By the grace of God, these pages include the fruits of both ancient and modern scholarly endeavour in the line. They are representative of all that is available on the subject of worship in the Islamic literature. In them, I have attempted to present the eternal truths in modern idiom for the benefit of the present day Muslims who are steadily getting deprived of the contribution made by the venerable masters of the bygone days on account of their unfamiliarity with the traditional forms of expression. This state of affairs is most unfortunate for our up and coming generations and should be remedied at once for it amounts not only to the disavowal of the debt we owe to the worthy forerunners of Islamic thought but also to the disparagement of the glorious heritage of knowledge which is not equalled in the field of religion by any other community in the world.

Side by side with the forms and regulations of the different modes of worship, the Muslims have also been scrupulously passing down their inner meaning and moral and spiritual significance to the succeeding generations. Both of these processes of transmission have been going on through the centuries, without an interruption, and even now this legacy is as safe, intact and practicable as ever, and no one can give to the duties of worship an interpretation that was not known to the Muslim *Millet* in the past. Nor it is permissible to anyone to try to cast them in a new or alien mould.

It seemed proper to me also to examine the conception and plan of worship in other faiths, which, is one way or the other, claim an association with the Divine Law and are followed by large bodies of men. Hence, a comparative study was undertaken of the form and philosophy of worship in these faiths and in Islam, and, in it, reliance was placed only on such sources of information as are regarded dependable by their own scholars.

The approach, of course, had to be wholly academical and unbiased so that the heart of the matter could be placed before the readers with full confidence and sense of integrity.

It was, however, not an easy task by any means. The conceptual and legistic structure of the ancient religions is vastly different from that of Islam. In the *Corpus Juris* of the ancient faiths one finds a great deal of vagueness and confusion while such a thing is unknown to the Common Law and Jurisprudence of Islam. Owing to the investigation attempted in these pages of Islam and the other faiths in the sphere of worship the void generally occurring in the earlier books on the subject has, to some extent, been filled. Such an effort was all the more necessary because a Muslim cannot appreciate the full worth and virtue of Islam and the blessedness of the Divine gift of the Quran unless he is acquainted with the outline and arrangement of the forms of Divine adoration in other faiths, to speak nothing of the essential beliefs and doctrines upon which the entire edifice of Islamic creed and its scholastic philosophy is built. As Hazrat Omar once said, "The day is not far when one who is born in Islam but wholly ignorant of Paganism will take it (Islam) to pieces, loop by loop and link by link."

Admittedly, worship is a vast and developing subject with an unlimited scope for study and research. Additions are being made to the fund of knowledge available in respect of it and new books are being written. The present writer will keep himself abreast with the latest works on this fascinating topic and make use of them in subsequent editions.

Another consideration that has led to the writing of this book, in spite of persistent ill-health and multifarious preoccupations and responsibilities, is that for sometime a kind of confusion and waywardness has been noticed in the appreciation and presentation of the aims and objects, benefits and advantages and nature and wisdom of these duties. Boldly and without any compunction, these are being subordinated to contemporary social, political and economic theories and principles and interpreted in terms that are not only incompatible but also

inimical.

Consequently, a strong possibility has got created of those coming under the influence of this particular way of thought losing sight of the basic reality of the fundmental duties and getting deprived of their inner vitality. They may grow oblivious to the very purposes for which these duties have been prescribed and even fail to appreciate what *Iman* (faith) and *Ihtisab* (Expectation of Divine Reward) really stand for, with the materialistic viewpoint coming to rule over the spirit of worship and single-minded devotion. It, in fact, poses a grave threat to the *Millet* which can be a prelude to the perversion of the understanding of the basic truths and realities of the faith and aims and objects of the *Shariat*.

The fulfilment of the task would have been inordinately delayed had Allah not paved the way for it, out of His kindness. It so happened that my friend, Dr. Saeed Ramadan, who brings out a journal in Arabic from Geneva called *Al-Muslimoon* asked me to write a series of articles on the *Haj* Pilgrimage. I contributed three articles, at yearly intervals, to the magazine which were publised in it on the occasion of the *Haj*. These were also repeatedly broadcast by the Saudi Arab Radio and received with warmth and appreciation in the educated Arab circles.

When, after sometime, I read the articles again it occurred to me that a new style had been evolved in them for explaining the aims and ideals of the *Haj* which could be employed with advantage to make amends, partly, for the neglect of this pillar of Islam that has fallen victim to modern intellectual trends and political way of looking at things more than any other form of worship in our religion, so much so that even sensible persons have begun to think of it as a sort of International Political Conference and in their view its importance lies in that alone. I, thereupon, decided to write in greater detail on the subject and to publish it in the form of a pamphlet in which the institution of *Haj* was presented in its true and comprehensive shape, its deeper and more important aspects and attributes were brought to light and the spirit of Hazrat Ibrahim was sought to be

revived in its full grandeur and solemnity.

Meanwhile, I was persuaded by Dr. Saeed Ramadan to write a couple of articles on *Saum* (fasting) which, also, were published in *Al-Muslimoon.* It then, struck me to include two remaining planks of worship, *Zakat* and *Salat*, in our discussion, and, thus, the blue-prints of the present volume gradually emerged in the mind and it took hold of my imagination so completely that I could spare no time for any other literary work. A whole year was spent in the collection of material after which I began to dictate the manuscript and got so engrossed in it that I almost lived with the whole thing.

Due to failing eyesight I had to depend much on friends and colleagues in the preparation of the book. I am particularly indebted to Nisarul Haq Nadwi, Molvi Taqiuddin Nadwi, Mufti Zahoor Nadwi, Ali Adam Afriqi, Mohammad Saeed Afriqi, Nazrul Hafeez Nadwi and Ghayasuddin Nadwi for their unstinted help and co-operation. In the translation of long extracts from the English sources Shahid Ali Siddiqui has been most helpful. May Allah reward them bountifully on behalf of both the author and the readers.

The first Arabic Edition of the book was published in Beirut (Lebanon) in 1968, and since then it has seen three reprints. A Turkish translation of it appeared a year later from Qaunia. The Urdu translation was entrusted to Molvi Mohammad Al-Hasani (Editor, *Al-Ba'ath*) who possesses a special aptitude for rendering my Arabic writings into that language. I have also made a few additions while going through the Urdu manuscript. And now, by the grace of God, the English version is also seeing the light of day.

What is now in your hands is the result of years of study and research. It is hoped that, if nothing more, it will succeed in opening a new avenue of thought on a subject of profound importance.

DAIRA-I-SHAH ALAMULLAH
RAE BARELI
(INDIA)

ABUL HASAN ALI NADWI

S A L A T

(Regular Worship)

And establish regular worship, and be not of those who ascribe partners unto Him. (-xxx : 31)

I

THE true meaning of *Salat* and its real worth and significance can be appreciated only when there is an adequate awareness of the innate character of the relation that obtains between God and man. This bond is absolutely unique. It is not possible to conclude about it on the basis of the ties we experience between any two persons around us, as for instance, between the master and the slave, the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor and the donor and the recipient. It is a much more sublime, strong and comprehensive relationship than any of these.

Relations are Governed by Attributes

For a proper understanding of the nature and importance of the bond between the Lord and His slaves it is, again, necessary to acquire some knowledge of the Divine Attributes for it is the attributes that govern the relations. We cannot understand the real nature of relationship between any two beings unless we are duly informed of their essential qualities and of the association of amiability and gratitude that is established between them. All the ties we cherish in the world, all the social relationship we observe and all the rights and obligations that go to mark the law and bring into existence a civilised society are determined by the moral and material attributes which are at work in the different fields of human existence.

Importance of Divine Names and Attributes in the Quran and the Shariat.

Hence, in all the revealed scriptures, religious systems and holy laws the foremost stress is laid on the Divine Attributes and it is then that the details of worship are set forth and teaching on duties and obligations and social conduct and monetary dealings formulated. The correction of the conceptual tenets and doctrines has been given priority in all Divine faiths over worship, deeds and commandments, and every Apostle, in his life-time, has devoted the greatest attention to imparting a true knowledge of the Attributes of God and His purity and Sublimity, and made it the central point of his teachings. The holy Quran which is the custodian of all the heavenly scriptures and the Last and Eternal word of God offers a classical case in point. It takes it up for its central theme and returns to it again and again and deals with it in a thousand ways. It is for this reason that the brief *sura-i-Ikhlas* in which the oneness of God and His Sublimity has been summed up in a few verses of matchless eloquence and profundity is often described as one-third of the Quran.[1]

The holy Quran has dwelt upon the glorious Attributes of Allah, His Beautiful Names, His Functions and Authority, His Creativeness and Originality, His Benevolence and Mercifulness, His Love and Compassion, His Munificence and Forgiveness, His power to Bestow and to Withhold, His Control over Gain and Loss, His Knowledge and Wisdom and his Nearness and Companionship in such a thorough and authoritative manner that what emerges from it is undoubtedly the ultimate picture of Elegance and Majesty, Perfection and Greatness and Beauty and Beneficence. It says:

> His is the Sublime Similitude in the heavens and in the earth. He is the Mighty, the Wise. (—xxx : 27)
>
> Naught is as His likeness; and He is the Hearer (and) the Seer (of everything). (—xlii : 11)

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1. It is related from Hazrat Abu Huraira in *Bukhari* that *Sura-i-Ikhlas* is equal to one-third of the Quran.

Man is a Mixture of Opposites

In the revealed Scriptures one finds a number of observations that throw a flood of light on human psychology and its inner contradictions. There is, without doubt, no one more wonderful, delicate and sensitive among all the created beings than man. At the same time, he is the biggest mixture of opposites. He is weak, yet an adorer of strength; he is poor, yet crazy after wealth; he is a mortal, yet a seeker of eternity; he is an heir to a hundred ills and ailments and yet in quest of health and happiness. He is fainthearted as well as ambitious; his needs are endless and his desires unbounded. He is more sensitive than an air bubble, yet fidgety and restless. His feelings and emotions change from moment to moment. His thirst is unquenchable. He does not rest on his laurels and is never contended. He is intolerant of the old and new. What he has holds no charm for him while what he does not have is always beckoning him, drawing him to itself. This limited world, this fleeting life, is utterly inadequate for the fulfilment of his desires and aspirations.

But in these very contradictions, in the loftiness of his ambition and the restlessness of his soul, lies the secret of man's glory and his elevation to the office of the Vicegerency of God on earth. It was this sublime peculiarity of his nature which induced him to accept the forbidding responsibility of trusteeship after the heavens, the earth and the mountains had declined to shoulder it.

> Lo! We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth and the hills, but they shrank from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it.
>
> Lo! He hath proved a tyrant and a fool.
>
> (—xxxiii: 72)

Love and Affection

Love is ingrained in the nature of man. His clay has been kneaded with it. Along with the five senses by which man perceives and responds to the material world there is another

instinct in him which we call love, affection or attachment. This instinct can be strong as well as weak, manifest as well as hidden. But if it were to become extinct, it would be a clear proof of the fact that man has lost his intrinsic superiority and worthiness, turned away from his original destiny and into the domain of fossils and stones. Man is both loyal and sensitive. His emotions are excitable and his feelings are delicate. He is drawn irresistibly towards beauty and perfection. He is ready to sacrifice everything, life, liberty and happiness, for the sake of the beloved. The memorable stories of lovers, the stirring deeds of all men of faith and suffering and the entire emotional and intuitive literature and lyrical poetry of the world are inspired by the tender passion called love.

Surrender and Submission

Man has been endued with an instinctive desire to submit and surrender, to pay homage and bow down in resignation to someone. This urge has been present in him at all the stages of his evolution. He has never been able to overcome it. During the primitive times (and this state of civilisation is still persisting in some parts of the world) man sought the satisfaction of this instinct by prostrating himself before trees, rivers and hills, by worshipping the fire, the sun, the moon and the stars, and by idolizing the saints, the monks, the ghosts and the angels. He was prone to be overawed by anything that was beyond the scope of his understanding, and, even today, inspite of all the claims to rationality and progress, he is caught, identically, in the spell of political leaders, ideologies and movements. In these days of 'culture', 'enlightenment' and 'liberalism', he is enamoured, in the same way, by writers, poets, artists and inventors and by other men of wealth and renown, and his infatuation is inspired by the same sentiments of love, reverence and self-surrender as in the days of yore, simply because by his very nature man is a loving creature and it is inherent in him to love and admire and lose his existence in the adored one. This yearning is a grand peculiarity of his being and he has

never lived without it.

Man stands in needs of an ideal, an embodiment of excellence—or, in the words of the Quran, a *Sublime Similitude*—which can satisfy his inner urge by virtue of being above and beyond his comprehension, by its exceptional beauty and perfection and power and authority.

The Correct Concept of the Bond Between God and Man

Let us, now, recall to our minds the Immaculate Attributes of the Lord, His Omnipotence, Magnanimity, Benevolence, Knowledge and Omniscience, and His Elegant Names as revealed in and interpreted by the Quran. We may also take note of such of the attributes of man as can be summed up in the two words of indigence and helplessness as well as to his ambitiousness and passion for distinction which has not been granted to any other living being, to his unquenchable thirst and insatiable appetite in both the material and spiritual spheres of his life—to the never-ending catalogue of his needs and desires, and to the sentiment of love, devotion and submission which runs through every fibre of his existence.

From the above it follows that man should always hold himself in a state of obeisance, loyalty, worship and supplication before the Lord who is the Supreme Being, the All-powerful, the King of Kings, Who provides for all his needs whether expressed by him vocally or otherwise *(And He giveth you of all ye ask of Him, and if ye would count the bounty of Allah ye cannot reckon it)*[1], and Who is aware of his innermost thoughts and feelings and even of desires and aspirations he himself has forgotten or given up out of despair and in respect of which, sometimes, his heart does not tolerate even the participation of the intellect.

> And know that Allah cometh in between the man and his own hearts. (—viii : 24)
>
> He knoweth the transgression of the eyes, and that which the bosoms hide. (—xl : 19)

1. Al-Quran—xiv: 34.

> And if thou speakest aloud, then lo! He knoweth the secret (thought) and (that which is yet) more hidden. (—xx: 7)

Who is nearer than the nearest and hears and responds more than any other hearer:

> And when My servants question thee concerning Me, then surely I am nigh. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he crieth unto Me. So let them hear My Call and let them trust in Me, in order that they may be led aright. (—ii· 186)
>
> We verily created man and We know what his soul whispereth to him, and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein. (—l: 16)
>
> And We are nearer unto him than ye are, dut ye see not. (—lvi: 85)

He loves him who beseeches Him, supplicates to Him for his needs and cries out to Him for help, more than those who do not:

> And your Lord hath said: Pray unto Me and I will hear your prayer. Lo! those who scorn My service, they will enter Hell, disgraced. (—xl: 60)
>
> (O mankind!) Call upon your Lord humbly and in secret. Lo! He loveth not the transgressors." (—vii: 55)

It is related that the holy Prophet once said: "God is displeased with His servant who does not supplicate to Him for his needs.[1]"

The Entire Creation is occupied with paying Divine Honours to God

Since the beginning of time the sun has been the source of light and energy and it has been continuously discharging its function, without a fault or interruption, and the moon has been determining the months and years by its movement. Similarly, the mountains have been doing duty at their posts

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1. *Tirmidhi*

for thousands of years, the trees are standing where they are, engrossed in Divine worship and rendering service to mankind with their shade and fruit, the air is blowing from one place to another carrying the message of life to man (who is the leader of the universe and the Vicegerent of God), the clouds are floating from place to place sending down the rain which imparts a new life to earth, causes the springs to flow and induces the crops to grow and the fields to open up their bowels, the quadrupeds, presenting a picture of *Ruku*[1], are running here and there, serving as beasts of burden and providing milk, meat and hides to mankind, and even the insects that crawl on their bellies are mutely fulfilling the will of God and serving the cause of man in various ways. All these created things which possess neither intellect nor feeling, are, thus, ceaselessly paying their homage to God and carrying out His command. There is no intransigence on their part, no revolt, no defiance, no protest. They are incessantly occupied with paying honours to the Almighty.

> Hast thou not seen that unto Allah payeth adoration whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the hills, and the trees, and the beasts, and many of mankind, while there are many unto whom the doom is justly due. He whom Allah scorneth, there is none to give him honour. Lo! Allah doth what He will. (—xxii : 18)
>
> And unto Allah maketh prostration whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth of living creatures, and the angels (also), and they are not proud. They fear their Lord above them, and do what they are bidden. (—xvi : 49-50)
>
> And unto Allah falleth prostrate whosoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, as do their shadows in the morning and the evening hours. (—xiii : 15)

1. Bowing low in prayer.

> The sun and the moon are made punctual. The stars and the trees adore. (—lv : 5-6)
>
> Allah is He who created the heavens and the earth, and causeth water to descend from the sky, thereby producing fruits as food for you, and maketh the ships to be of service to you, that they may run upon the sea at His command, and hath made of service unto you the rivers;
>
> And maketh the sun and the moon, constant in their courses, to be of service unto you, and hath made of service unto you the night and the day. And hath given you of all ye ask of Him, and if ye would count the bounty of Allah ye cannot reckon it. Lo! Man is verily a wrong-doer, and ingrate. (—xiv : 32-34)

The living and non-living things, in spite of the difference of form and nature and in the modes of their worship, are engaged in the veneration and glorification of the Lord in a manner typical to their function and disposition. But only those blessed with spiritual insight can perceive it.

> The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise Him, and there is not a thing but hymneth His praise; but ye understand not their praise. Lo! He is ever Clement, Forgiving. (—xvii : 44)
>
> Doth thou not know that Allah, He it is Whom all who are in the heavens and the earth praise and the birds in their flight? Each of them knoweth verily the worship and the praise; and Allah is aware of what they do. (—xxiv : 41)

Place of Man in the Scheme of Creation

Of all the created beings man was, by virtue of the inherent superiority of his position and latent qualities of mind and character, most worthy of staying permanently in a state of Divine worship and veneration, singing His praises and glorifying His names all the time. The special favours bestowed upon him by God and the exquisite rewards set apart for him would seem to require that he did not spend a moment of his life in anything

except Divine worship and adoration and devoted his entire existence to His glorification and adulation like the angels about whom it has been said in the Quran.

> Unto Him belongeth whosoever is in the heavens and the earth. And those who dwell in his Presence are not too proud to worship Him, nor do they weary; They glorify Him night and day; they flag not. (—xxi : 19-20)

But since man had to serve as the Vicegerent of God in the world and to fulfil a crucial role in the entire design of creation he was also endued with certain desires and needs. He was provided with feeling and emotion, with the twinge of love, the sensation of joy as well as the pang of sorrow, and with the zeal for knowledge and enthusiasm for adventure. He was, further, endowed with the power to unravel the mysteries of nature and to harness them to his use. The distinction he enjoys of having been taught "All the Names" is indicative of his intrinsic worth and merit and symbolic of his high position as the representative of God on earth. Says the Quran:

> And when thy Lord said unto the Angels: Lo! I am about to place a vicegerent on the earth. they said: Wilt Thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee? He said: Surely, I know that which you know not. And He taught Adam All the Names, then showed them to the angels, saying: Inform Me of the names of these, if ye are truthful.
>
> They said: Be Glorified! We have no knowledge saving that which Thou hast taught us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Knower, the Wise.
>
> He said: O Adam! Inform them of their names, and when he had informed them of their names, He said: Did I not tell you that I know the secret of the heavens and of the earth? And I know that which ye disclose and which ye hide. (—ii : 30-33)
>
> He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth. (—ii : 29)

> Say: Who hath forbidden the adornment of Allah which He hath brought forth for His bondman and the good things of His providing? (—vii: 32)

It is for these reasons, for the carrying out of the obligations that go with the exalted office of Divine Vicegerency and the fulfilment of the mission which is the real purpose of His creation that man has not been bound to constant worship and prayer, he has not been constrained to keep himself engaged permanently in *Qayam*[1], *Ruku*[2] and *Sujood*[3] and in the other forms of God-remembrance as the case is with planets, trees, mountains, birds and animals. Were he even to try to do so he would be making an admission of his failure as the Vicegerent of God and providing a confirmation of the objection raised by the angels who had offered their services in his place thinking that they were more suited to wear the mantle of Vicegerency as they were constantly occupied with worship and veneration.

In view of it, there was needed for man a form or system of worship that was in keeping with the distinctiveness of his personality, with his task and function and place and position in the world and with the duties and obligations entrusted to him as the deputy or representative of God. Worship was essential for him for it constituted the high requirement of his nature and the lofty purpose of his being. Yet, it had to be wholly in accord with his natural instincts and the peculiarities of his position, fitting his entire personality like a well-cut garment.

Salat

Salat is the attire, the raiment that has been designed and tailored exclusively for man.

> Should He not know what He created? And He is the Subtile, the Aware. (—lxvii: 14)

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1. Standing erect in prayer.
2. Bowing the head in reverence.
3. Act of prostration with the forehead touching the ground.

Lo! We have created everything by (a particular) measure. (—liv: 49)

The method adopted for *Salat* is a marvel of smooth and orderly progress towards a dignified ideal. In the *Meraj*,[1] fifty daily prayer-services were prescribed for the believers and, then, their number was reduced to five.[2] This was done to impress upon man that the number of daily services originally ordained for him was fifty and that he had been found capable by God of devoting such a large part of his time and energy to His worship. One who kept it in mind will never regard the five daily prayers as excessive. On the other hand, he will realise that he had been found worthy of much more and had the Lord, out of His Grace, not made the concession he would be carrying out His command dutifully and celebrating as many as fifty prayer-services (*Salat*) every day. God showed His favour to him and treated him with kindness and made the five prayers equivalent of fifty. But the original command, still, is there to stir his ambition and urge him on to greater effort.

This contention is strengthened analogically by the Quran which tells that initially the Muslims were required to remain steadfast in the face of an enemy ten times stronger but, later, a

1. The celestial journey of the Prophet in which he was taken through the seven heavens to the very presence of the Lord.
2. In a long Tradition dealing with *Meraj* it is related (in the holy prophet's own words) that: "The Lord decreed fifty prayer-services (*salat*) during the day and night for me. When I came down to Moses he enquired from me, 'What has the Almighty prescribed for your followers?' I replied, 'Fifty prayer-services.' He, thereupon, said, 'Go back to your Lord and beg Him to reduce their number as your community does not possess the strength to celeberate so many prayer-services. I have enough experience of the Children of Israel. I, accordingly, went back to the Lord and implored Him to make a concession for my followers, The number of the daily service was then reduced by five". (The Tradition goes on to tell of many similar requests and reductions till, as the sacred Prophet relates): "When five prayers were left the Almighty was pleased to observe: 'O Mohammad! These are five prayers during the day and night and each of them is equal to ten prayers. Thus, they in fact make for fifty prayer-services'."

concession was made and they were told to be resolute against an enemy twice as strong as they were and to overcome him. It says:

> O Prophet! Exhort the believers to fight. If there be of you twenty steadfast they shall overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a hundred steadfast they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve, because they (the disbelievers) are a folk who understand nothing.
>
> Now hath Allah lightened your burden, for He knoweth that there is weakness in you. So if there be of you a steadfast hundred, they shall overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a thousand steadfast they shall overcome two thousand by permission of Allah. Allah is with the steadfast. (viii : 65-66)

Inspite of the allowance made in the above verse the original command proved very helpful in rousing the Muslims to superhuman deeds of valour and inspiring them to be brave and fearless against the heaviest odds. If this verse is still recited, despite its revocation, the object, perhaps, is to enkindle an undying spirit of courage and fearlessness among the Muslims and to impress upon them that this, in fact, is the way of true Muslims and faithful crusaders.

Spiritual Substenance

The five daily prayers are to be celebrated only at the hours prescribed for them by God.

> Worship at fixed hours hath been enjoined on the believers. (—iv : 103)

The time-schedule of *Salat*[1] has also been indicated in the

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1. For instance, in *Sura-i-Bani Israel*, it is stated:

> Establish worship at the going down of the sun until the dark of night, and also at dawn. Lo! prayer at dawn is the time of immediate Nearness. (xvii : 78)

Some commentators of the Quran have inferred that the word '*Duluk*' (in the above verse) denotes the three prayers Zuhr, Asr and Maghrib, and *Ghasaqil Lail* denotes the Salat of Isha, and *El-Fajr*, that of the

[Continued on page 15

Quran and *Rak'ats*[1] for each of them have been fixed which it is necessary to observe. The holy Prophet, and, after him, the blessed Companions scrupulously observed these hours throughout their lives and in all circumstances. Even in times of war they did not suffer an alteration in them. There has been such a great deal of continuity, regularity and uniformity about the *Salat* that it is impossible to find a parallel in any other community. The Muslim Millat has preserved it zealously and passed it on dutifully from one generation to another without a single day's break however adverse things might have been for it.

The five daily prayers, with their fixed hours and *Rak'ats*, are the spiritual food, restorative and panacea prescribed for the mankind by its Creator and Preserver, the Lord of Lords, the All-Knowing and the All-Wise. One should refrain from questioning the Law and Wisdom of the Supreme Being, the All-Seeing and the Omniscient, who is not only the Healer of the souls but, also their Maker and submit implicitly to His Will. The *Salat* ought to be offered up at the hours and in the form, measure and manner laid down by God. The celestial significance of these hours, their inner radiance and the heavenly blessings which descend during them and the rich provision of spiritual advancement they contain are known only to Allah and His Apostle.

One of the reasons for the marking out of these hours is that the polytheists used to worship their false deities like the sun, the stars, the stones and the fire, at that very time.

[*Continued from page* 14]

morning.

Another verse of the Quran reads:

> Celebrate the praises of thy Lord ere the rising of the sun and ere the going down thereof. And glorify Him some hours of the night, and at the two ends of the day, that thou mayst find acceptance. (—xx : 130)

1. The *Salat* consists of a number of cyclic parts each ending with two *Sajdas*. The parts are known as *Rak'ats*.

Hence, the same hours were fixed for the worship of the One God.

Follow unquestioningly, as we do, the instructions of our physicians with regard to the dosage of the medicines prescribed by them, although they are, after all, humans like ourselves and their knowledge is at the best only relative, there is no reason why should our attitude be different towards the commands of God whose glory is such that:

> He gave unto every thing its nature, then guided it aright. (—xx: 50)
>
> Should He not know He created?
> And He is the Subtile, the Aware. (—lxvii: 14)

Wisdom of the Hours of Prayers and their Continuity

In the systematic ordering of *Salat*, and in its repetition and continuity, interspersed, as it is. with brief intervals, there lies great wisdom. The *Salat* contains an excellent provision for the nourishment of the soul and provides a most valuable defence against the inroads of materialism and God-negligence. In the words of Hazrat Shah Waliullah (1702-1762):

"The state of affairs and the programme of life of the Ummat[1] can never be sound unless attention is paid to it at short intervals and after every little while. Even the act of waiting for *Salat* and making preparations for it is a part of it and has a share in its effulgence.

"Thus, a major portion of one's time is taken up by it. Our own experience is that a person who will go to bed with the intention of rising up for *Tahajjud*[2] will, at least, not sleep like an animal. In the same way, one who will be seized with anxiety for *Salat* or any other form of worship will not easily give way to the inordinate desires of the flesh. The same is the import of the Prophet's Tradition: 'He who woke up in the night..............'And so also says the Quran:

1. The followers of Prophet Mohammad.
2. A Superogatory prayer offered in the latter part of the night.

Men whom neither merchandise nor sale (and purchase) beguileth from remembrance of God."[1]. (—xxiv : 37)

Importance

Our belief and conviction about *Salat* should be that it is the pillar of faith, the means to salvation and the dividing line between a Muslim and an apostate.[2] It has been stressed by God as a fundamental requisite of piety and enlightenment.

> This is the Scripture whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off evil, and who believe in the Unseen, and establish worship, and spend of that We have bestowed upon them. (—ii : 2-3)
>
> He is successful who becometh clean, and remembereth the name of his Lord, and prayeth. (—lxxxvii : 14-15)

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1. The reference is to the Tradition related in *Bukhari, Tirmidhi*, and *Abu Da'ud* from Hazrat Obada bin Samit which says that if a person wakes from sleep in such a state that the words of the *Kalima* or Divine praise and glorification come to his lips and he makes a supplication or offers up the *Salat*, after performing the ablution, his supplication or *Salat* will gain acceptance with God. What Shah Waliullah means is that when a person is so deeply attached to the remembrance of God and his solicitude for *Salat* is such that he begins, instinctively, to recite *Kalima* and sing His praises on waking up in the night he will not sleep in the carefree manner of the animals. (—*Hujjatullah-el-Baligha*, p. 78.)
2. The Quran says:

   And establish worship, and be not of those who ascribe partners (unto Him). (—xxx : 31)

   But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due, then leave their way free. (—ix : 5)

   But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due, then they are your brethren in religion. (—ix : 11)

   It is related by Jabir bin Abdullah that once the Prophet said, "Between a man and apostasy there is only the giving up of *Salat*". In *Tirmidhi* the same Tradition has been reproduced in these words, "What separates a believer from apostasy is simply the *Salat*." Hazrat Buraida, again, relates that the Prophet once remarked. "The covenant between us and these people is that of *Salat*." There are other Traditions also bearing the same import.

Making a distinction between those who establish worship and those who persist in evil and are debased and perverted, the Quran declares:

> Save worshippers who are constant at their worship. (—lxx : 22-23)

Of the Muslims who are successful it is said:

> And those who paid heed to their prayers. (—xxiii : 9)

And about the dwellers of the Hell we are told:

> What hath brought you to this burning? They will answer: We were not of those who prayed. (lxxiv : 42-43)

And, about the Hypocrites:

> Lo! the hypocrites seek to beguile Allah, but it is Allah Who is turning their guiles on them. When they stand to worship they perform it languidly and only for showing it to men, and they are mindful of Allah but little. (—iv : 142)

Salat is enjoined upon every one whether he is free or in bondage, rich or poor, healthy or sick, and on a journey or staying at home. No man or woman who has attained the age of majority is exempt from it. Unlike the other obligatory modes of worship, like *Zakat*, *Saum* and *Haj*, which are subject to various conditions, *Salat* cannot be neglected even on the battlefield. It is said in the Quran:

> And when ye go forth in the land, it is not sin for you to curtail your worship, if ye fear that those who disbelieve may attack you. In truth, the disbelievers are an open enemy to you.
>
> And when thou (O Mohammad) art among them and arrangest (their) worship for them, let only a party of them stand with thee (to worship) and let them take their arms. Then when they have performed their prostrations let them fall to the rear and let another party come, that hath not worshipped and let them worship with thee, and let them take their precaution and their arms. Those who disbelieve long for you to neglect your arms and your baggage that they may attack you once for all. It is no sin for you

to lay aside your arms, if rain impedeth you or ye are sick. But take your precaution. Lo! Allah prepareth for the disbelievers shameful punishment.

When ye have performed the act of worship, remember Allah, standing, sitting and reclining. And when ye are in safety, observe proper worship. Worship at fixed hours hath been enjoined on the believers. (—iv : 101-103)

Be mindful of (all) your prayers, and (specially) of the mid-prayer, and stand up with devotion to Allah. And if ye go in fear, then offer your prayer standing or on horseback. And when ye are again in safety, remember Allah, as He hath taught you that which (heretofore) ye knew not. (—ii : 238-39)

Need of Constancy and Perils of Default

Salat is an obligation about which, what to speak of a saint or a crusader, even a Divine Messenger or an Apostle cannot afford to be negligent : *And worship thy Lord till the inevitable cometh unto thee.*[1] If anyone imagines that after attaining the goal of God realisation or spiritual enlightenment or due to being engaged in the service of Islam in any other way or because of his lofty achievements and high position *Salat* has no longer remained compulsory for him and he can dispense with it, he is labouring under a grievous delusion.

Example

The resemblance of a person who is misled by his attainments and spiritual merit into believing that he can give up *Salat* or be negligent about it is as that of a wise and learned man who while travelling in a boat takes upon himself to remove a nail or a board from it on the assumption that on account of his learning he can safely do away with it and the

1. XV : 99 (All the commentators are agreed that the word *Yaqeen* in this verse denotes death. It is a well-known principle of Conceptual Science that no sane person or one who has attained the age of majority is excluded from the observance of an obligatory duty).

boat sinks along with its passengers owing to his foolish pride.[1]

Secret

The real secret of the amazing power of *Salat* to safeguard and protect faith, to promote God-consciousness and to keep one steadily within the fold of Islam and in the community of believers is known only to God. A devout and venerated scholar[2] has made use of the following analogy to explain the point. He writes :

> "Suppose a man built a stately mansion on the top of a hill and decorated it with all sorts of things. When the hour of his death approached he advised his son to make whatever changes he liked in the house but not to touch the patch of aromatic grass he had planted in it even if it became dry. Then came the spring and the hill and dale were covered with lush green vegetation. A new kind of grass grew up in plenty which was more fresh and sweet-smelling. Some of it also found its way into the palace filling it with its agreeable smell before which the aroma of the older grass faded. The son thought that his father had planted the grass so that it gave out its sweet odour and kept the house fragrant but now that a new and better grass had grown up there was no need to preserve it. He, thus. ordered it to be cut and thrown out of the house. When the house had been cleared of it, a poisonous snake came out of a hole and bit him and he died. The reason was that the grass had two purposes : one was to emit a sweet smell and the other was that it was endowed with a peculiar property to keep away the snakes. A snake could not come where it grew. But no one was aware of it. The son relied too much on his knowledge and judgement. He imagined what was not known to him did not exist in the

1. The above example has been taken from a letter of Sheikh Sharafuddin Yahya Maniri of Bihar.
2. Sheikh Sharafuddin Yahya Maniri.

treasure-house of God. He was ignorant of the meaning of the Quranic verse : *Of knowledge ye have been vouchsafed but little.* The pride of knowledge was his undoing."[1]

The same is the case with the shirker and defaulter of *Salat*. If any one feels that he does not stand in need of *Salat* since he has already achieved the object for which it is prescribed or regards it to be unnecessary on account of his piety, devoutness or participation in *jehad* or devotion to the cause of religious preaching and propagation, and gives it up he is literally standing on the verge of an abyss and all his spirituality and religious exertion will not only not avail him anything but also prove to be a curse and source of misfortune.

Salat stands for the fulfilment of the basic human urge to give expression to one's humbleness, to surrender oneself out of earnest devotion and reverence to someone, and to come under the merciful protection of God, the Gracious One, who is the Absolute, the All-powerful, the All-wise, the All-knowing, the All-hearing, the Omniscient, the All-merciful, the Giver, the Cherisher and the Sustainer. It marks the satisfaction of the instincts of love, gratitude, fidelity and servitude, and of fear and humility that are inherent in man and can justly be described as the chief attributes of humanity. *Salat* is to the believer what water is to the fish. He can never be at ease without it. The Prophet's words that "The coolness of my eyes lies in *Salat*",[2] convey the same meaning. Similarly, the Prophet used to say to Hazrat Bilal when the time for prayer came, "O Bilal! Give the call to *Salat* and bring comfort to my heart."[3]

The Refuge of the Believer

Salat is a more secure, a more soothing, pleasing and comforting refuge for the believer than the lap of the mother is for a weak and orphaned child. Just as when the child feels

1. *Maktoobat-i-Seh Sadi.*
2. *Nithai*
3. *Abu Da'ud*

hurt or is annoyed or seized with fear or afflicted with thirst or hunger, it clings to its mother or sits on her lap thinking that now it was safe, *Salat* is the greatest shelter and heaven of peace for the believer. It is the rope, strong and unbreakable, which is stretched between him and his Lord and Creator. He can gain the assurance of safety by holding it whenever he wants. It is the sustenance for his soul, balm for his wound and panacea for his ills.

The Quran reads :

> O ye who believe! Seek help in steadfastness and prayer. Lo! Allah is with the steadfast.
>
> (—ii : 153)

Whenever the sacred Prophet was worried he used to turn to *Salat* for help. It is related by Hazrat Hudhaifa that "when a vexing problem arose or a distressing circumstance developed the Prophet used to stand up for prayer."[1] Hazrat Abu Darda relates that "when a strong wind began to blow in the night the holy Prophet would go to the mosque and stay there till it had subsided. Similarly, at the time of the solar or lunar eclipse he kept himself engaged in prayers as long as it lasted."[2]

It is related in *Abu Da'ud* from Nadr :

> "Once it grew very dark in the days of Hazrat Anas. I betook myself to him and asked, 'O Abu Hamdha (as Hazrat Anas was otherwise called)! Did such a thing ever happen in the lifetime of the holy Prophet?" He replied, 'Fie! Even if a violent dust-storm arose we used to run and take shelter in the mosque in the fear that the Last Day was near'."

The unbounded attachment of the holy Companions to *Salat* and their readiness to forego the most desirable things of life for the sake of it was not unknown even to the Polytheists. It is related in *Muslim* on the authority of Hazrat Jabir that "we were engaged in a holy war against the tribe

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1. *Abu Da'ud*
2. *Tabrani*

of Juhaina, in the company of the Prophet. They fought very hard............When prayer-time came they used to say, 'it is time for their *Salat* which is dearer to them than their children'."[1]

Salat is Representative of Body, Mind and Heart

Salat is not merely the name of certain physical movements. It is not a wooden, lifeless ritual or something of a military discipline in which one's own choice or volition has no place. It is an act in which all the three aspects of human existence, physical, mental and spiritual find their due expression The body, the mind and the heart participate in it jointly and in an ideal manner. The acts of standing erect kneeling and prostration appertain to the body, recitation appertains to the tongue, reflection and contemplation to the mind, and fear, repentance and lamentation to the heart. All these different aspects are mentioned in the Quran. Of the physical movements it says:

> Stand up with devotion to Allah. (—II: 238)
>
> O ye who believe! Bow down and prostrate yourselves, and worship your Lord, and do good, that haply ye may prosper. (—xxii: 77)

The participation of the mind is alluded to in these verses:

> O ye who believe! Draw not near unto prayer when ye are drunken, till ye know that which ye utter. (—iv: 43)

And about the deeds of the heart we will refer to the following verses:

> Successful, indeed, are the believers who are humble in their prayers. (—xxiii: 1-2)
>
> Who forsake their beds to cry unto their Lord in fear and hope, and spend of what We have bestowed on them. (—xxxii: 16)

Human personality is a many-sided thing. It is made up of the body, the mind and the heart. All the fundamental aspects

1. Meaning that it was the time to take advantage of their absorption and launch an attack.

of human existence are represented in *Salat* which is the foremost manifestation of faith. Some religious legists, men of prayer and devoutness, and Jews of the last phase saw only physical action in it while among the Oriental mystics and intellectuals some held it merely to be a form of contemplation and meditation. Yet again, many an ignorant Christian monk and so-called Muslim ascetic thought that it was symbolic of love and devotion, grace and adoration, warmth and ardor, sorrow and broken-heartedness and awe and repentance alone. They all stopped at what they imagined, but, as a little reflection will show, these people were sadly misguided and ignorant of the marvellous comprehensiveness of the institution of *Salat*.

Arrangement

The sole object of the excellent and all-embracing design and structure of *Salat* set up by the Divine Law is that by means of it man may attain the fulfilment of his spiritual destiny, the noble qualities of humility and earnestness, and love and fear of God may develop in him and he may dissociate himself completely from everything that is apart from God and turn his back upon everyone who should seek to be a partner of God in his Divinity, Magnificence, Sovereignty and Authority and call on men, by word or deed, to worship Him or claim by his conduct that it was in His hands that lay the power to enjoin or prohibit or He alone was to be feared and made the centre of their hopes and aspirations. Its aim is to generate within the subliminal self of man such spiritual power, light of faith and awareness of God as can enable him to strive successfully against all kinds of evils and temptations and remain steadfast at times of trial and adversity and protect himself against the weaknesses of the flesh and the mischief of immoderate appetites.

Facing the House of Ka'aba

Islam enjoins that in all the five daily prayers the face should be turned towards the time-honoured House that was built solely for God and was consecrated exclusively to His

service and had become the symbol of Monotheism even at the time when all the homes and places of worship in the world were devoted to the veneration of fictitious deities, and stones, planets and other imaginary gods and goddesses were openly worshipped in them.

> Lo! The first House appointed for mankind was that at Mecca, a blessed place, a guidance to the peoples.
>
> (—iii: 96)

The foundation of which House had been laid by the auspicious hands of the Great Patriarch, the Father of the Prophets, the leader of Monotheism and the earliest Founder of the present Millat, Hazrat Ibrahim, and his blessed, son Ismail.

> And when Ibrahim and Ismail were raising the foundations of the House, (Ibrahim) prayed: Our Lord! Accept from us (this duty). Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Hearer, the Knower. Our Lord! And make us submissive unto Thee, and of our seed a nation submissive unto Thee, and show us our ways of worship, and relent towards us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Relenting, the Merciful.
>
> (—ii: 127-28)

Which has for its supporting structure the worship of the Almighty and whose very existence is a declaration of war against all mythic and pagan deities of the world.

> And (remember the time) when Ibrahim said: My Lord! Make this territory (Mecca) the city of Peace and Security, and protect me and my sons from serving idols. My Lord! Lo! They have led many of mankind astray. But whoso followeth me, he verily is of me. And whoso disobeyeth me—still Thou art Forgiving, Merciful.
>
> (—xiv: 35-36)

The singling out of this House of Ka'aba for the *Qibla* and the turning of face towards it during the greatest and most popular act of worship, thus, forms a most emphatic declaration of the Oneness of God and affirmation of loyalty and devotion to Hazrat Ibrahim, to his creed and spiritual call and to the centre of worship he built.

(Follow) the faith of your father, Ibrahim. He hath named you Muslims. (—xxii : 78)

As Sheikhul Islam Hazrat Shah Waliullah writes; "Since Ka'aba is among the landmarks of Allah it is incumbent on us to hold it in reverence, and the greatest token of reverence is that the face should be turned towards it in our best and most elevated state. To stand facing a particular direction is also among the signs of God. Its object is that the attributes of fear, repentance and concentration may develop in the worshipper and he may feel that he is standing with his head bowed like a lowly slave in the presence of the Lord. That is why, it has been made an essential part of the *Salat*[1]".

This prudent act, the determination of *Qibla*, has given rise on a universal scale, to a unique emotional and spiritual unity. It has been instrumental in the promotion of Islamic solidarity, in the spiritual integration of the Muslim Millat, and in imparting to it the ability to concentrate its energies on a specific issue and in a particular direction.

Hazrat Shah Waliullah goes on to say : "To turn in *Salat*, with reverence and a feeling of nearness to God, towards a place marked out exclusively for Him is very efficacious in the cultivation of evenness of mind, fear, humility and concentration. In it the same attitude is manifest as that of standing before a king."[2]

And, further, "As the attentiveness of the heart was a hidden condition, the turning of the face towards the House of Ka'aba has been prescribed as a sign and evidence of it and made an obligatory condition like *Wadu* (ablution), cleanliness and the covering and veiling of the female body. And as reverence is a state of feeling and an inner sensation, the physical acts and movements which are generally carried out in the presence of a king and regarded as a part of courtly behaviour have been enjoined as its outward proof and expression."

1. *Hujjat*, p. 36
2. *Hujjat*, p. 73
3. *Ibid.*

Takbeer

We are required to begin the *Salat* with *Takbeer* or the prescribed formula of *Allah-O-Akbar* (God alone is Great). It is that clear, eloquent and forceful affirmation which is capable of evoking a ready response among all peoples and at all times. Before it, the magic-spell of the mightiest of rulers and the most powerful of men, as well as of the man-made dieties, idols and images is broken and they are reduced to a heap of ashes provided, of course, that it is uttered with conviction and understanding and the pretenders to Divine power and majesty know what its implications are and how far-reaching can its effects be. In truth, the desire for Divine power and eminence is the common attribute among all the images of stone that are worshipped, the personalities to which reverential homage is paid, the things that are held in fear and respect, the forces of nature before which prostration is carried out and the national leaders and men of authority who are blindly followed and to whom unqualified obedience is rendered. The brief but revolutionary proclamation, enjoined by the Quran through the exhortation of *And glorify thy Lord*, strikes at the root of all such claims, pretensions, myths and deceptions and destroys them for ever. It rejects and repudiates the power and authority of everyone except God and puts an end to each and every source of tyranny and corruption.

Importance

When a person believes with a sincere heart in this affirmation and proclaims *Allah-O-Akbar* as a mark of testimony to the Greatness and Majesty of the Lord and this conviction sinks into the innermost depths of his heart and begins to pervade his entire existence the might and splendour of the worldly kings, political leaders and overlords loses its significance in his eyes and they evoke no fear or wonder in him. He becomes supremely indifferent to them and the display of their wealth or power fails to make any impression on him.

Innumerable instances of the glorious unconcern and

contemptuous disregard shown by the holy Companions at the display of wealth, power and position are available in history. We have it, for example, on the authority of the well-known historian. Ibn Kathir that Rabe-e bin 'Aamir was once sent by Hazrat Sa'ad as his envoy to the Court of Rustam, the Commander-in-Chief of Iran. Rustam received him in a grand durbar hall which was decorated with magnificent carpets. The Commander-in-Chief, wearing a crown and robes which sparkled with gems, sat on a throne. Rabe'e, in contrast, was very poorly attired. He was almost in rags and carried a shield that was too small for him. His horse, too, was of a common breed, on which he rode straight towards Rustam, the pony trampling the costly carpets under its hoofs. On getting closer to the throne, he dismounted, tied the reins of the horse to a bolster and started to walk up to Rustam, still wearing his helmet and arms. The officers of the Court remonstrated against it, saying that he should, at least, take off the helmet before going in the presence of the Commander-in-Chief. But Rabe-e retorted, "I have come not of my own accord but at your request. If you do not want me, I will go back". Rustam, thereupon, intervened and told his officers to let him come as he liked. Rabe'e proceeded, leaning upon his lance and piercing the carpets with it at each step. People enquired about the object of his visit and he said, "We have been sent by Allah to deliver whom He pleases from the overlordship of His slaves (i. e., men) to His own overlordship, and from the narrow confines of this world to the boundlessness of the next and from the oppression of other religions to the fairness and justice of Islam.[1]"

The strength of faith and courage of conviction flowing out of the confessional formula had endued those blessed Muslims with almost superhuman qualities. Extraordinary deeds of bravery and resoluteness have, indeed, been performed because of it throughout the annals of Islam. The Muslims had begun to conduct themselves at such a high level of dignity and self-

1. *Al Bidaya Wan-Nihaya,* Vol. VII, p. 9

respect in the presence of kings and potentates that it is not easy for many a people to maintain it even in their dealings with the weak and the poor. The bubble of their imperial pomp and splendour was pricked. A friend of Sheikhul Islam Izzuddin bin Abdus Salam has related an incident of the same kind in these words.

"Our mentor, Sheikh Izzuddin, once went to the Sultan[1] in the fort. It was the day of I'd. He saw that the royal durbar was being held and the troops were arrayed before the sovereign. The Sultan was present in his full magnificence and the grandees and noblemen were kneeling on the ground out of awe and deference. The Sheikh turned towards the Sultan, and addressing him by name, said, 'O Ayub! What answer would you give to God if He were to ask you: We gave thee the kingdom of Egypt and thou permitted wine?' The Sultan enquired, 'Is it so?' 'Yes', replied the Sheikh, 'On such-and-such a shop wine is being sold and other forbidden things are also taking place while you are lost in luxury and self-indulgence.' He spoke in a loud voice and the soldiers looked on respectfully. The Sultan, thereupon, remarked, 'It is not of my doing. Things have been like that since the time of my father'. 'Are you', interjected the Sheikh, 'among those who say: *We found our forefathers on the same path*[2] ?' The Sultan ordered the shop to be closed at once. When the Sheikh returned and the news of the incident spread I enquired from him about it. He said, 'My friend! When I saw his splendour I felt that it was for his own good that he should be humiliated a little otherwise his ego would swell and become uncontrollable.' I asked 'Were you not afraid?' The Sheikh replied, 'As surely as I believe in God! When I reflected upon the

1. Sultan Al-Malik-us-Saleh Najmuddin Ayub of Egypt.
2. The allusion is to the Polytheists of Arabia who rejected the Call of Faith on this very ground. They said that they were doing only what their forefathers did.

Power and Glory of the Lord in his presence it appeared to me that a cat was sitting on the throne'."[1]

The history of the power of faith and earnestness of religious endeavour has continuously been repeating itself. We will reproduce another event belonging to the same category. It is narrated by Sheikh Mahmud bin Mubarak Kirmani that :

"Once Sultan Mohammad bin Tughlak summoned Sheikh Qutubuddin Munawwar to Delhi. The saint had not paid homage to the king on a certain occasion and he wanted to take him to task for it. When the Sheikh came to the royal palace, the Court nobles, ministers, heralds and attendants were standing in a double row in front of the throne. On seeing the glittering spectacle, the Sheikh's son, Nuruddin, who was with him and had never been in a king's court before, was struck with fear. The Sheikh admonished him sternly. 'Glory is for God, Baba Nuruddin,' he said to him in a loud voice. The son related later that as soon as he had heard these words, he felt a new strength within him and all the fear disappeared and it began to look to him that the Court grandees were not men but sheep and goats."[2]

Opening Prayers and Invocations

The prayers and invocations with which the sacred Prophet began a prayer-service would appear to be little else than the acknowledgement and affirmation before the Almighty of His Unity, Majesty and Sublimity and of one's own humbleness. Some of these are :

O God ! With Thy glorification and Thy praise ; Blessed is Thy name, and great is Thy glory, and there is no god save Thee.

O God ! Let the same distance intervene between me and my sins as is between the East and the West. O God !

1. *Tabaqat-ul-Sha'fiyat-ul-Kubra*, B Vol. V, p. 82
2. *Siyar-ul-Aulia*, pp. 353-55

Cleanse my heart of vice and evil-doing as a white sheet of cloth is of dirt. O God ! Wash away my inequities with water, with the pure and sparkling water of snow and hail.

God alone is great ! All praise is to God, in full measure and in plentitude. Glory be to God each morning and evening. O God ! I seek refuge in Thee from the enticement, the whisper and the spite of the wicked Devil.

The refuge is then sought from the Devil and in order to keep the *Namaz* (or *Salat*) and reverence for the Quran safe from his mischief it is begun with *Bismillah*, in accordance with Quranic dictum : *And when thou recitest the Quran, seek refuge in Allah from Satan, the Outcast.* (—xvi : 98).

Sura-i-Fateha

Let us now take *Sura-i-Fateha*. This *Sura* (chapter) is a priceless gem of the Quran. If the scholars, moral teachers and spiritual mentors of the world were to get together to produce a text which could suffice for all men, irrespective of the diversity of their needs and circumstances, and through which they could express in their prayers what lay at the bottom of their hearts they could not bring forth the like of it. About it the Quran declares.

> Say (O Mohammad) : Verily, though mankind and Jinn should assemble to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce the like thereof though they were helpers one of another. (—xvii : 88)

At another place, about the same *Sura*, it is mentioned in the Quran :

> We have given thee the seven verses (which are recited again and again) and We have given thee the Quran. (—xv : 87)

The *Sura* begins with *Hamd*[1] which is a comprehensive formula of praise and thanks-giving and ranks among the expressions that cannot be translated properly into any other

1. Meaning the praise of God.

language.

Hamd is the aptest way in which a loyal and grateful slave can begin his prayer and commence the choicest homage of kneeling and genuflexion which *Salat* is.

During its recitation the devotee feels that the Lord whom he is worshipping and whose praises he is singing is not the Lord of a particular race, country or community but of the whole world. This new and revolutionary concept demolishes, at one stroke, all the artificial barriers that have done a grievous harm and injustice to humanity. A Muslim, thus, proclaims a two-fold unity upon which rests the peace and happiness of mankind and it is on these two basic principles that Islam proceeds to reconstruct the human society. One is the unity of the Creator of the human race, and the other is of its earliest progenitor. In this way, the organic oneness of mankind is established, in spite of the walls of race, colour or geography that have got erected within it, for, is not every human being bound with the other in a double relationship, one spiritual in the sense that the Lord and Master of all of them is the same, and the other, physical since they all are the children of the same father ?

> O Mankind ! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from them twain hath spread abroad a multitude of man and woman. Be careful in your duty toward Allah in Whom ye claim (your rights) of one another, and toward the kindred. Lo ! Allah hath been a Watcher over you .
> (—iv : 1)

> O Mankind ! Lo ! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another . Lo ! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Verily, Allah is the Knower, the Aware. (—xlix : 13)

An elucidation of it can be obtained from the following Tradition of the holy Prophet :

> "God has removed from you the blemish of Ignorance and the pride of birth. Now, there are only two classes of

men, those who are righteous and God-fearing and those who are wicked and sinful. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, except, of course, that he excels him in piety.[1]"

Among the Excellent Attributes of God the worshipper has already accepted as an article of faith, the first he calls to his mind in prayer is that of Benevolence. There can be no better Attribute to think of at such a time, for *Salat* is the occasion when a Muslim prostrates himself before God with sentiments of submission, reverence, supplication and repentance. It is a moment of hope, not despair. The devotee, then, reflects on the Hereafter, on the Day of Divine Reward and punishment, when the Power and Authority of the Lord will reveal itself in full glory and no king or potentate will venture to breathe in His persence: *Whose is the sovereignty this day? It is Allah's, the One, the Almighty.* He renews in his heart the belief in the life to come which is the beginning of all fear and solicitude for the Final Reckoning. Loaded, as our world is, with all sorts of allurements and inducements the need of such a belief for a Muslim is self-evident. Thereafter, he declares with the full force and eloquence of the Arabic language (in which the Quran was revealed and which has been decreed to be the universal language of *Salat*) that *Allah alone does he worship and to Him alone does he beg for help.*

Life is but another name for prayer and supplication. It is through it that bond is established between man and man, between strong and weak, rich and poor, ruler and the ruled and the Deity and the devotee. Once these two things, prayer and supplication, get reserved exclusively for God, all the earthly chains are broken, and Polytheism, with all other forms of the fatal mischief, comes to an end. It is the greatest pledge a Muslim makes to his Lord, again and again, during the day and the night. He is of course, expected to be heedful of what he says. The entire order of life, outside the *Salat* is ruthlessly

1. *Tirmidhi*

driving him towards two things: fear and seeking of help; and it is against these that he sets himself at defiance when he enters into the covenant and makes the affirmation we have just mentioned.

The worshipper, thereafter, prays to God to guide him to the Straight Path. The guidance is his first and foremost need, on it alone rests the wonderful charm and fascination of Paradise. Without it nothing is worth living for, and, after it, there is nothing which cannot be given up. Man has always been in quest of it. It is ingrained in his heart and soul. But this guidance cannot attain reality in a vacuum. It can be appreciated and acted upon only when we have some living examples before us. These are the ones known by the names of the Prophets, the Truthful, the Martyrs and the Righteous. The holy Quran and all the sacred Scriptures have called on us to love and follow these august specimens of humanity and to associate ourselves whole-heartedly with them.

> Those are they whom Allah guideth, so follow their guidance. (—vi : 91)

At the sametime, it is demanded of believers to keep clear of those who stray away from the path of guidance and take to ingratitude, sensuality and self-destruction or go the extreme end of defiance and transgression and lay themselves open to Divine Displeasure and Chastisement or are guilty of concealment, distortion and misinterpretation of faith.

> Show us the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast favoured; Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray. (—i: 5-7)

After *Sura-i-Fateha* the devotee is required to recite from memory some part of the Quran he can easily remember. The Quranic injunction runs as follows: *So recite of it (the Quran) that which is easy (for you).* The object is that the devotee may be able to appreciate intelligently the meaning and import of the verses he recites and to profit spiritually from them. *Salat*, in this way, is worship as well as education.

Graduated Worship

In *Namaz* (or *Salat*), the worshipper proceeds towards *Sajda* (Prostration) stage by stage. He begins with standing erect, then he bows low in *Ruku*, then stands erect again for a moment, and then leans down to carry out the *Sajda*. This graduated process is aimed at wearing down his sense of pride and vanity and producing within him the spiritual climate of reverence and humbleness. Again, in the *Ruku*, he proclaims *Glory to my Lord Who alone is Majestic*, but when he arrives at the last stage of submission and places the most dignified part of his body, the head, on the lowly ground he pays the highest tribute to the Greatness and Sublimity of the Almighty by declaring, *Glory to my Lord Who alone is High*. The majesty of this proclamation is heightened by the solemnity of the posture and the sacredness of the place where he offers the *Salat*. Between the two *Sajdas*, the worshipper also sits up for a while in order to re-equip himself spiritually for the next act of prostration and derive added joy and vitality from it.

Genuflexion of Love

This is the genuflexion of love which breaks into pieces the shackles of law, habit and custom that have imprisoned the spirit of man. The devotee covers his forehead with dust in front of the Almighty and surrenders himself for the moment to the promptings of the heart. Now, there is neither a limit to submission and repentance nor a restriction on the shedding of tears. A storm rages within him and the cup of his heart begins to overflow. The holy Companions have related about the Prophet that during the *Sajda* sounds used to come from his bosom as if a pot was placed on fire and the something was boiling in it.[1] It is related by Amr bin el-Aas that once the sacred Prophet let out a deep sigh at the end af a *Sajda* and said, "O Lord! Hath Thee not promised that Thou shalt not send down Thy punishment on the believers if I am present

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1. *Abu Da'ud* and *Tirmidhi*

among them? Hath Thee not promised that Thy anger shall not overtake them as long as they offer repentance?"[1]

In the whole of *Salat*, *Sajda* marks the highest point of nearness or communion with God. It is the most worthy and adorable act in His sight. A Tradition has it that "the bondman is nearest to his Lord in the *Sajda*. So beg earnestly of Him and supplicate to Him solemnly in it." The devotee, thus, tries to make the most of this priceless moment and cries his heart out in the presence of the Almighty.[2] He, so to speak, says:

> O Lord! Thou heareth what I say and seeth wherever I am and in whatever state. Thou knowest what is secret and what is manifest in me, and naught concerning me is concealed from Thee. I am in distress, a beggar. I beg Thee for protection and succour. Thy fear is gripping me. I confess my sins. I entreat Thee like a poor, helpless suppliant. I beseech Thee like a wretched sinner. I implore Thee like an afflicted, awe-struck slave—a slave whose head may be bowed before Thee, whose tears may be flowing in Thy presence, and whose body may be bent (in utter submission),—a slave who may be lying prostrate on the ground, begging and imploring and crying his heart out. O Lord! Do not reject my prayer; have mercy on me. O Thou! The Best and Most Excellent of Givers and the Noblest of Helpers.

This is the *Sajda* before which the mountains have quivered and the earth has shaken. The heads of powerful rulers and arrogant despots used to bend against its irresistible force. The all-conquering *Sajda* of intense love and devotion has, time and again, come to the rescue of the Millat and lent it a helping hand in its crusading endeavours and religious expeditions. The history of Islam is studded with its glittering achievements. On

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1. *Abu Da'ud* and *Nassai*
2. According to the legists of the Hanafi school entreaties and supplications are allowed in the *Sajda* of the *Nafl* prayers. In the *Sajda* of the obligatory *Salat* only *Subhana Rab-biyal Aa'laa* should be said.

many an occasion it has changed the course of history, altered the destiny of nations and turned the defeat of the weak into victory and the victory of the strong into defeat.

Durood

After completing the *Qayam*, *Ruku*, *Sujood* and other formalities of *Salat*, the worshipper recites the *Kalima* of affirmation and invokes the blessing of the Lord on the holy Prophet and sends his respectful salutation to him. He says, "Peace be with thee, O Prophet, as well as the Mercy of God and blessings." He also prays to God to shower His choicest favours upon His Apostle: "O God!" says he, "Bless Mohammad and his posterity (or followers) as Thou hast blest Abraham and his posterity (or followers). Verily, Thou art the Praiseworthy, the Majestic."

The Prophets are the permanent medium of guidance between the Creator and the created. It is through them that men acquire a correct awareness and understanding of the Divine Being and His matchless attributes and enjoy the good fortune of remembering His Immaculate Names and doing virtuous deeds. Hence, when the inheritors of the heavenly kingdom will enter into it, singing the praises of the Lord, they will not only say:

> The praise to Allah, Who hath guided us to this. We could not truly have been led aright if Allah had not guided us. (—vii: 43)

But, also, that:

> Verily, the Messengers of our Lord did bring the Truth (which became the source of our guidance). (—vii : 43)

The reason is that the Divine Messengers were the apparent cause of their guidance and salvation. It was through their merciful agency that the world was saved from the gloom of apostasy and delivered from the dreadful chastisement of the Hereafter. They are, therefore, entitled to our deepest gratitude. All those for whose redemption and upliftment they endured the

severest of hardships and made stupendous sacrifices are bound in duty to express their heartfelt thankfulness to them. The boon of *Salat* itself is the outcome of the earnest endeavours the Prophets made and the fearful persecutions they bore in order to carry the light of faith to mankind. Our sense of fairness and obligation demands that before we end the *Namaz* (or prayer-service) we should make an openhearted acknowledgement of our loyalty and indebtedness to them.

The high position the sacred Prophet enjoys in the spheres of preaching and propagation and struggle in the cause of God and His religion is not equalled by anyone. When he began his Divine mission there were barely a handful of men throughout the world who believed in one God and worshipped no one besides Him. The Arab Peninsula in which he was raised up was steeped in Apostasy and Paganism. There was not a single soul in it that was free from the blemish of Polytheism and adored and made his submission solely to the Almighty. In the House of Ka aba itself, which was the first House of God and the foremost seat of Monotheism, as many as 360 idols had been installed and whistling and hand-clapping were the main items of worship.

> And their worship at the (holy) House is naught but whistling and hand-clapping. (—viii: 35)

But before the holy Prophet bade farewell to the world he had seen with his own eyes that the garden of Apostleship laid out by him was in full bloom, Islam had swept over the land of Arabia like wind and rain and people were coming into its fold in ranks: *And Thou seest mankind entering the religion of Allah in ranks*. Mosques were being built all over the country, the *Azan*[1] was being given in every village and hamlet and Muslims were seen flocking together ardently to celebrate *Salat*. Their number and their enthusiasm did not suffer a decline even during the Prophet's last illness when he was unable to lead the congregation personally.

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1. Muslim call to prayer.

Is *Salat* the millions of Muslims are offering today in the East and the West not a gift of the Prophet to them and a fruit of his endeavours? And will it not be proper and fitting for them to invoke to God, towards the end of the service, which is nothing but an expression of gratitude and an act of giving thanks to Him, to magnify the sacred Prophet and bless him with His choicest favours for it all was solely due to his magnificent efforts and exertions?

There is also an aspect of protection against Polytheistic beliefs and ideas in the invocation. When a person will pray to God to bless the Prophet with the conviction that such a supplication is a source of felicity and good fortune for the Divine Apostle the realisation will, naturally, dawn upon him that there is absolutely no one in the world who is not in need of Divine Mercy and Forgiveness or who may be regarded as a co-equal or partner of God in His Being or Attributes.[1] The sacred Prophet is a *Mercy to the Worlds* and "the leader of the earlier and the later ones"[2], and yet God has enjoined upon Muslims to send their salutations to him and beseech the Lord to bless him with His most wonderful favours.

> Lo! Allah and His angels shower blessings on the Prophet. O ye who believe!
>
> Ask blessings on him and salute him with a worthy salutation! (—xxxiii: 56)

The Prophet himself has extolled the virtue of sending blessings on him and exhorted his followers to keep it up.

Partner in Salutation and Mercy

After hymning the Lord, as is His right, and imploring blessings on His Apostle and saluting him with a respectful salutation the worshipper definitely gets a share of the Peace and Benediction he has at heart and which is an important feature

1. Adapted from Mohammad Manzoor Nomani's *Ma'arif-el-Hadith*, Vol. IV.
2. Meaning all mankind.

of Islam and the subject of greeting among Muslims. He says: *Peace be with us as well as with the pious servants of God.* It defines, determines and indicates that he is with the pious servants of the Lord and their partner and co-sharer in salutation, peace, fraternisation and mercy. It engenders hope and promotes self-confidence in him and rids him of despondency and frustration. It brings him in line with the other worshippers of the Ummat (who include men of exceptional faith, piety and spirituality) and confers an equal status on all of them.

> They are Allah's party. Lo! is it not Allah's party who are the successful? (—lviii : 22)

The worshipper, then, prays for himself and seeks refuge in God from the punishment of Hell, the punishment of the grave, the calamity of Dajjal and the trials and temptations of life and death.[1] All these things are such that refuge should be sought from them and prayer made for protection against their mischief. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said; "There has been no Apostle of God since the time of Nooh (Noah) who may not have warned his people against Dajjal. I too, warn you against him and advise you to be on your guard.[2]"

Conclusion

At the conclusion of the service, the worshipper, after having offered it up in a proper manner and with due regard to the rules prescribed for it, makes a confession of his faults and lapses. Silently, he seems to say, "I have not worshipped Thee as Thou ought to be worshiped". He brings *Salat* to an end

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1. It is related in *Muslim* on the authority of Ibn-i-Abbas that the Prophet used to teach him this prayer in the same way as he taught the Quran O God! I seek refuge in Thee from the punishment of Hell, from the punishment of the grave and from the calamity of Dajjal; I seek refuge in Thee from the trails and temptations of life and death." It is related by Abu Huraira that the Prophet said, "When you have finished *Salat* beg for the protection of God from four things: punishment of Hell, Punishment of the grave, the mischief of life and death and the calamity of Dajjal."
2. *Abu Da'ud*

with the prayer taught by the Prophet to Hazrat Abu Bakr (the noblest of his followers) :

> O God ! I have done my soul a great harm and no one can forgive sins except Thee ; so grant me forgiveness with Thy pleasure and have pity on me. Thou art Most Forgiving, Most Merciful ? [1]

The most superior form of worship, the *Namaz* (or *Salat*) is, thus, completed with an admission of one's inability to do justice to it. Evidently, there can be no better way to conclude an act of devotion and humbleness.

The worshipper does not finish his *Salat* as though he had come through an ordeal. It is not as if he was a prisoner who had somehow regained his freedom or that someone had tied him with a rope which he had, at last, been able to break. He does it with quiet dignity and in a respectful manner. He turns his face, first to the right, then to the left, wishing peace and blessings of the Lord to his partners in the service, to all Muslims and to the Angels who may have been a witness to the act. He pronounces: *Peace be with you and the blessings of the Lord.* It appears that he had moved to some other plane of existence and was now greeting everyone on his return to the earlier state as people do when they come home after a long absence.

True Salat

The *Salat* of true devotion and reverence has nothing in common with the worship of the non-God. The two are just the opposite of one another. *Salat* is emphatically incompatible with the adoration of the non-God (which expresses itself mainly through Polytheism, idolatory and superstition) and servility to non-God (which generally takes the form of the adulation of rulers, political leaders and other men of power and wealth).

The yielding of obeisance and submission to non-God is wholly antagonistic to the spirit of *Salat*, to the covenant between the worshipper and the Worshipped One and to the

1. *Bukhari*

things that are recited in it. It is inconsistent with the *Takbir* with which *Salat* is begun. It is antithetical to *Alhamdu Lil-laahi Rab-bil 'Aalameen* which declares that no one is worthy of praise and the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds save the Almighty, to *Iyyaka Na-budu Wa Iyyak Nasta'een* which proclaim that He alone is deserving of worship and supplication, and to *Ruku* and *Sujood* which denote that all Physical and spiritual, open and hidden, bowing and prostration is intended exculsively for Him. Thus it is that those who are blessed enough to offer *Salat* in the true sense have always been conspicuous for boldness and courage in the presence of powerful lords and sovereigns, for unflinching championship of truth, for contentment and self-denial in worldly affairs and for refusal to compromise with evil and injustice in any form or at any place.[1]

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1. Outstanding instances of it are found even in recent history. It is related about a disciple and close associate of Hazrat Syed Ahmad Shaheed (died 1831 A. D.) that once he had to go to a Muslim Hakim (*i. e.*, practitioner of the Unani system of medicine). He was an old gentleman and prolonged illness had further reduced him to a skeleton. The Hakim lived at a distant place. When he arrived there, travelling all the way on foot and enduring great hardship, he had to wait for a long time for the Hakim to appear. When, at last, the Hakim did come out he busied himself in offering *Salat-i-Ghausia* which is celebrated in a peculiar way, with one's face turned towards Baghdad. On seeing it, the old gentleman left the place at once with his companion. In the way, the companion asked, "You put yourself to so much trouble to come here and waited patiently for the Hakim for such a long time. But when the Hakim came out you left without consulting him. I could not understand it." The old gentleman replied, "May Allah show you the straight path. Did you not see that the Hakim was guilty of infidelity to God and Polytheism?" "But", said the companion, "What had we to do with his beliefs? We had come to him because of his professional skill and not religious or moral conduct." The old gentleman, thereupon, remarked, "May Allah grant you wisdom! If I had overlooked his transgression and kept quiet at it how could I stand before my Lord in the night and recite the verse of *Dua-i-Qunoot* in my prayers: *We part company with him who disobeys Thee and transgresses against Thy laws?"*

Influence on Morals

The efficacy of *Salat* in restraining vicious desires and curbing lewdness and sensuality is equalled only by the Confessional Formula of *La-ilaha-Ilallah*. It is stated in the Quran :

> Recite that which hath been inspired in thee of the Scripture, and establish worship. Lo! worship preserveth from lewdness and iniquity, and verily remembrance of Allah is most important. And Allah knoweth what ye do.
>
> (—xxix : 45)

Salat brings about a radical change in the moral and mental outlook of man and gives it a new orientation. It leads him from the wicked to virtuous deeds and endues his heart with the love of faith. It makes apostasy. defiance of God and profilgacy repugnant to him. But all this takes effect only when the *Salat* is real and genuine and charged with life, warmth and vitality. When Hazrat Shu'eyb gave the call to his people to follow the path of *Tawheed* (Monotheism), piety and well-doing and warned them against the dreadful consequences of injustice, violation of the rights of others and cheating in weighment, they looked for the primary cause of the change that had come about in his life and came to the conclusion that it was the *Salat* they had seen him offering up frequently which had done it. It was the only visible act he had begun to perform of late which was totally non-existent in their lives. They, therefore, imagined that in it they had discovered the springhead of Hazrat Shu'eyb's call and solved the riddle of his refutation of the hereditary religion of his community and its ancient way of life. Innocently they enquired from him :

> O Shu'eyb! Doth thy way of prayer command thee that we should forsake that which our fathers (used to) worship, or that we (should leave off) doing what we will with our property? Lo! thou art the mild, the guide to right behaviour. (—xi : 87)

God has provided *Salat* with a wonderful atmosphere of sanctity, reverence, fellow-feeling and collectivity to appreciate which we will have to undertake a brief study of the rules and

regulations appertaining to it.

Azan[1]

The *Azan* prescribed by the Divine Law-Giver for summoning the faithful to prayer is not only expressive of its aim and purpose but also so richly, melodiously and eloquently imbued with the spirit and high ideals of Islam and the concept of Divine Unity that it has attained the position of a standing invitation to faith. This public proclamation of *Salat* has opened the heart of many a non-Muslim to Islam. It is entirely different from the methods prevalent in other religions and communities for summoning the devotees to prayer. This is the only call to prayer which is altogether free from the use of a material aid or implement like a horn or a bell, and includes also the marrow and substance of faith.[2]

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1. The summons to prayer proclaimed usually from the towers of a mosque.

2. There are a number of Traditions which tell us about the origin of the *Azan*. It is related by Abu Umar bin Anas that "the Prophet was concerned about the method of summoning the faithful to prayer. Some people suggested that a flag should be hoisted at the time of prayer on seeing which the Muslims should inform each other. The suggestion did not find favour with the holy Prophet. Then the blowing of the horn was proposed, as was the custom among the Jews, but the Prophet also did not like it. Afterwards, the ringing of the bell was talked about but the Prophet remarked that it was the way of the Christians. Meanwhile, Abdullah bin Zaid Ansari came, and he, too, was seized with the problem. In the following night, the *Azan* was inspired to him in a dream. He came to the Prophet the next morning and said, 'A person came while I was half asleep and half awake and taught me the *Azan*'. Hazrat Omar, also, had a similar dream some twenty days earlier but he had not disclosed it to anyone. When he heard of Abdullah's dream he told about his own inspiration to the Prophet, whereupon the Prophet observed, 'Why did you not tell before?' Hazrat Umar replied that he had not done so out of modesty. The Prophet then ordered Hazrat Bilal to do as Abdullah bin Zaid told and Hazrat Bilal, thus, gave the *Azan*."

The *Azan* proclaims the Glory and Greatness of God, that He is Greater than the greatest. It contains both the fundamental affirmations of Divine Unity and Apostleship of Prophet Mohammad, and includes the summons to prayer. It also declares that *Salat* is the way to felicity in both the worlds and success and salvation cannot be attained in either of them without it. Owing to these special features, *Azan* has become a complete and comprehensive call and proclamation of faith which instinctively appeals to the heart and the mind. It attracts both Muslims and non-Muslims. In the words of Hazrat Shah Waliullah:

> God, in His Infinite Wisdom, wanted *Azan* not to be a mere proclamation and warning but also to form a part of the fundamental practice of Islam and that its position in respect of the negligent should not only be that of an alarm or signal but also of preaching and exhortation and compliance of it should be regarded as a symbol of loyalty and devotion. It was necessary that it should include the name of God as well as the two affirmations and the call to prayer so that the objects specified above may be served[1].

Cleanliness

Cleanliness and ablutions *(Wadu)* have been prescribed for prayer.

> O ye who believe! When ye rise up for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbows, and lightly rub your heads and (wash) your feet up to the ankles. And if ye are unclean, purify yourselves. And if ye are sick or on a journey, or anyone of you cometh from the closet, or ye have had contact with women, and ye find not water, then go to clean, high ground and rub your faces and your hands with some of it. Allah would not place a burden on you, but He would purify you and

1. *Hujjat*, Vol. I, p. 152.

would perfect His Grace upon you, that ye may give thanks. (—v : 6)

If cleanliness is observed and ablution is performed with *Iman* (faith) and *Ehtisab* (assurance of recompense)[1] these are capable of producing within the worshipper a feeling of alertness and intentness and preparing him inwardly for welcoming *Salat* and partaking of its effulgence and tranquillity.

The holy Prophet has also strongly advised the brushing of the teeth[2] as a part of the ablutions for the daily services, so much so that he said, "But for the fear of adding to the toil of my followers I would have ordered them to do the *Miswak*[3] at each prayer-time.[4]

Mosques

Mosques have been built for celebrating the prayer-services. These are totally different from the other places of worship in their simplicity and elegance and in the profundity of spiritual atmosphere and strict observance of Monotheistic practices :

(They are found) in Houses which Allah hath allowed

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1. *Iman* and *Ehtisab* mean that a person should have a complete faith in the word of God and in the Divine reward and recompense as revealed by the Prophet and perform these acts (of cleanliness and ablution) willingly and respectfully. These things go a long way in lending weight and acceptability to one's deeds. Hazrat Abu Huraira relates that the Prophet once remarked that when a Muslim perfoms *Wadu* and washes his face all the sins he has committed with his eyes are washed away with the water he uses in it (or the last drop of it) and when he washes his hands all the sins he has committed with them are washed away with the water he uses in it (or the last drop of it) till he is wholly purified of his misdeeds and transgressions. In some versions (like those of *Saheeh Muslim* and *Muatta*) it is added that when he washes his feet all the sins he has committed by using them for going from one place to another also are washed away.
2. The phrase used is "the doing of *Miswak*" which means the brushing of teeth with a twig as the practice among the Arabs in those days and a number of Muslims do so even today.
3. A twig or tender shoot of the branch of a tree.
4. *Bukhari* and *Muslim*.

to be exalted and that His Name shall be remembered therein. Therein do offer praise to Him at morn and evening. Men whom neither merchandise nor sale beguileth from remembrance of Allah and constancy in prayer and paying to the poor their due; who fear the Day when hearts and eye-balls will be overturned.

(—xxiv : 36-37)

And the places of worship are only for Allah, so pray not unto anyone along with Allah. (—lxxii : 18)

And set your faces, upright (toward Him) at every place of worship and call upon Him, making religion pure for Him (alone). (—vii : 29)

O Children of Adam! Look to your adornment at every place of worship. (—vii : 31)

The mosques had rightly become the spiritual centres of Muslims and spring-wells of guidance and reformation. In them the religious and other collective problems of the Millat were attended to and instructions were issued regarding military expeditions. Whenever a significant event took place or a fresh campaign had to be launched and the Muslims were in need of a new lead it was announced to them at the command of the Prophet that they should offer the prayer on that day in the Prophet's mosque for there was an important matter to be discussed.

The pivotal and all-embracing character of thc institution of mosques was consistently maintained. Fountains of knowledge and guidance, movements of reform and upliftment and waves of *Jehad* and martyrdom arose and spread out from them. Even today the effects and traces of the bygone days, which are still existent in the mosques, are the envy of the non-Muslims. They look upon them with jealousy mixed with fear. It is necessary for the regeneration of Muslims that the pristine importance and centrality of the mosques be restored to them.

Spiritual Climate

The wise and Apostolic guidance provided for vesting *Salat*

with a religious and spiritual atmosphere holds the key to the promotion of the sentiments of reverential fear, concentration and solemnity in the worshipper. Hazrat Anas relates from the holy Prophet that "if anyone of you is offering the prayer, he is in communion with God. He should not (if the need be) spit in front of him or on the right side, but on left and under his feet."[1] One is required to follow the *Imam*[2] implicitly for in it lies protection against confusion and disharmony and also against the promptings of the self. One should neither go ahead of the *Imam* nor lag behind him. In the same way, the worshipper is not permitted to remain in one posture indefinitely, however ecstatic it may be and in whatever degree he may be wanting to prolong it because the essence of *Salat* lies in submission and faithful devotion to the Prophet and not in personal liking and inclination. The Prophet has said: "Offer *Salat* as you have seen me offering it."[3] The worshipper, thus, is obliged to follow the *Imam* faithfully from the beginning to the end. As the Prophet once said, "The *Imam* is appointed for no other purpose than that he should be followed."[4]

Nowhere is the majesty of the Lord more manifest than in a mosque. It is here that no special privilege is enjoyed by anyone: the master and the servant, the ruler and the ruled and the rich and the poor are all alike. It is like the valley of Mina about which it has been said in a Tradition that "Mina is the halting place of him who reaches there first."[5]

Islam has nothing to do with the innovations and changes made by the Muslim rulers and noblemen to assert their superiority after the age of the holy Companions. If any distinctions or preferences are observed in a mosque they are on the basis of superiority in respect of the knowledge of the Quran and Islamic

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1. Related by Abdullah Mas'ud (*Bukhari*). This applies to mosques with a gravel and not a cemented or marble floor.
2. One who leads *Salat*.
3. *Bukhari*
4. *Muslim*
5. *Tirmidhi*

Jurisprudence and piety and good-doing. The Prophet once said, "Nearest to me (in prayer) should be those who are men of knowledge and understanding, than those who are next to them and than those who come after them,"[1]

Congregation

About the *Fard* (obligatory) services it is prescribed that they should be offered in congregation. This is the true form and character of *Salat* in Islam. In the Quran it is stated: "*Kneel (in Ruku) with those who kneel.*"[2] The holy Prophet and his august Companions always abided by it as though it was an essential condition of prayer. The Prophet did not depart from it even during his last illness. It is related in *Saheeh Bukhari* on the authority of his wife, Hazrat Ayesha, that "when the holy Prophet fell ill he enquired at the time of *Salat* if people had offered it.' I replied, 'No. They are waiting for you.' He then said, 'Pour some water in the basin for me.' I did so and he performed the *Wadu.* As he tried to get up after it, he fainted. On regaining consciousness he again asked if people had offered the prayer. 'No'. I replied, 'They are waiting for you.' He thereupon. said, 'Pour some water for me in the basin'. He performed the *Wadu* but as he wanted to get up he again fainted. When he regained consciousness he asked the same question that whether the people had offered the prayer and I gave the same reply that they were waiting for him. The condition of the people was that they were sitting in the mosque and waiting for the *Isha*[3] prayers. The Prophet, therefore, ordered Hazrat Abu Bakr to lead the service."

The deep concern the holy Companions felt for the congregational service can be imagined from the following Tradition related by Abdullah bin Mas'ud :

People were brought to the congregation in such a

1. *Muslim*
2. Sura II : 43
3. The late evening service

condition that two men were supporting them and they had to be helped to stand in the row[1]

Another Tradition related by him reads.

Only two types of men used to miss the congregation, the open hypocrites and the sick.[2]

The Prophet was servere in his condemnation of those who did not offer *Salat* in congregation. It is related by Abu Hurarira that once on finding some persons absent from the congregation on a few occasion he remarked in anger."I sometimes feel like asking someone else to lead the prayers (in my place) and going round and seeing who the defaulters are and ordering that logs should be collected and their houses burnt down."[3]

Benefits and Advantages

God has endowed the congregational services with numerous virtues. Some of thes~ are of a social and collective nature like unity, solidarity and fraternisation which have been discussed at length by Muslim theological scholars. But there are other benefits in it also, those of an individual character, that are generally overlooked. One of these is that when a large number of Muslims get together with the object of turning towards God, with their heads bowed and hearts filled with hope and fear, special blessing of the Lord descend from the heavens and cover them up. In this lies the secret of the collective prayer of *Istisqa*.[4] the congregational services, the congregation of Friday and the concourse of the Haj.

By offering *Salat* in congregation it becomes easier to maintain regularity in worship, a competitive spirit is created among the worshippers and they try to excel one another. One can also correct one's mistakes and learn the rules governing

1. *Muslim* and *Abu Da'ud*
2. *Muslim*
3. *Ibid.*
4. A special *Salat* offered on a mass scale for the rain in a drought

Salat easily by offering it up congregationally. It, further, provides an excellent opportunity for the general body of worshippers to follow the example of the Ulema and other devout servants of the Lord.

Another notable advantage is that sometimes the whole congregation comes under the benign shadow of the Lord due to the devoutness and spiritual excellence of the venerable and virtuous men participting in it. The devotion and earnestness of a single man of God often exerts a bracing influence on scores of dejected and down-hearted people and because of him the prayers of all the participants in the congregation are accepted. As the holy Prophet once said," These (the devout and the pure in heart) are men the keepers of whose company are never left unblessed."[1]

The sacred Prophet was very particular about keeping the rows in order during a congregational service. He did not tolerate any confusion in them. This was because the full benefits of the congregation could not be derived nor the position of a *solid cemented structure* gained without the maintenance of discipline and orderliness in the ranks of the devotees in *Salat*. Besides, *Salat* is the training of whole life and one who does not learn to offer it properly will not be able to do anything in a fitting manner, whether belonging to this world or the next. It is related by Hazrat Anas bin Maalik that the Prophet once said, "Keep your rows straight for it is a part of the celebration of *Salat*."[2]

Similarly it is related by Noman bin Bashir that "the holy Prophet kept our rows straight like an arrow. One day he was about to call the *Takbir*[3] that he saw a man standing ahead of his row. He observed, 'Servant of the Lord! Correct your rows otherwise God will sow dissension among you."[4]

1. *Bukhari*
2. *Bukhari aud Muslim*
3. The formula of *Allah-o- Akbar* pronounced to mark the commencement of *Salat*.
4. *Muslim*

Congregational Service of Friday

The congregational service of Friday is distinguished by certain incentives and other features that have enhanced its solemnity and splendour and are conducive to the generation of enthusiasm for prayer and the promotion of the spirit of unity and co-operation among Muslims for piety and righteousness.

> O ye who believe! When the call is heard for the prayer of the day of congregation (Friday), hasten unto remembrance of Allah and leave your trading. That is better for you if ye did but know. (—lxii : 9)

Some of the Traditions of the holy prophet regarding the congregation of Friday are as follows:

> He who misses three Friday service (in succession) owing to heedlessness or indolence, God sets the seal on his heart.[1]

> Let people give up neglect of the Friday prayer otherwise God will set the seal on their hearts, and then they will become of those that are negligent.[2]

> Sometimes I feel like telling someone else to lead the prayers so that I could go and set fire to the dwellings of those who stay away from the congregation.[3]

For the Friday service a Muslim is required to take a bath, brush his teeth and use perfume and take the greatest care for cleanliness. A sermon is also delivered before the commencement of the service. The sermon the holy Prophet used to deliver was not of a routine nature but he dwelt on the current problems and realities of life and made it an effective medium of guidance and instruction. We learn from Hazrat Jabir that "when the holy Prophet delivered the sermon his voice got raised and his eyes became red. It appeared that he was warning against the enemy, an attack from whom was imminent (and could take place at any time of the morning or evening)."

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1. *Abu Da'ud Nissai and Ibne Majah* and others
2. *Muslim* and *Nissai*
3. *Ibid.*

Writes Allama Ibn-i-Qaiyim in *Zad-ul-Ma'ad*[1]:

"In his sermon the holy Prophet used to instruct and inform the Companions about the laws, principles and practices of Islam and if there was a matter of sanctioning or prohibiting he would sanction or prohibit (as the case might be)."

Commenting on the conduct of the *Imams* and preachers of his day, the Allama remarks:

"Then a long time elapsed, the light of Apostleship faded from the eyes and rituals took the place of Commands and practices became common which were carried out mechanically and without regard to their purpose and significance. People became obsessed with outward forms and ceremonials and thought only of observing them in an impressive manner. The rituals were elevated to the status of the *Sunnah*[2] and lofty ideals and objectives, in respect of which the least amount of negligence or variation was forbidden, fell into neglect. They embellished their sermons with glittering phrases and far-fetched ideas, but the thought-content declined till the very object of the sermon, was lost.[3]"

The sermons of the venerated Prophet were neither lengthy nor tiresome as the practice is today. The sermons, nowadays, are generally used for making a display of one's learning or stealing a march over others. In them the emphasis is laid largely on local and superficial issues (over which there is an unlimited scope for raising a controversy) and open attacks are made on those who hold a different view. Consequently, the listeners, instead of deriving solace and satisfaction are filled with disgust and weariness, and the solemnity and dignity of the Friday sermon, which is its chief characteristic, is destroyed. The sermons of the Prophet used to be realistic and to the point and full of radiance and vitality. Like his conversation they were precise and appealing, neither too long nor too short. Jabir bin Samura

1. Vol. I, p. 115
2. The confirmed practice of the holy Prophet.
3. *Zad-ul-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 115

tells that "the *Salat* of the Prophet was moderate, and so was his sermon. He recited a few verses of the Quran and then he gave good counsel to the people."[1] Another Tradition has it that "the holy Prophet did not deliver a long sermon on Fridays but said only a few words."[2]

The sermon should be heard quietly for full benefit can be acquired from it only in a peaceful and spiritual atmosphere. The sermon is an occasion for prayer not eloquence. It is strictly forbidden to talk to one another during a sermon. Even stopping those sitting close to one from talking is not permitted for it, too, is a source of disturbance. A Tradition says that "he who told his companion in a Friday congregation to keep quiet also indulged in unnecessary talk."[3]

By its very nature, the Friday congregation should be held only in one mosque, or in a limited number of mosques in a town[4] (provided that the town is not so big and extensive that it may be difficult for its people to assemble in one mosque) so that the Muslims can collect once a week, at one place. This will go a long way in strengthening the bonds of solidarity and brotherhood among Muslims and, at the sametime, serve as a safeguard against the pollution and distortion of their religious beliefs and practices. But the Muslims, unfortunately, have been prone to be lethargic and neglectful with the result that the effectiveness and grandeur of the Friday congregation has

1. *Muslim*
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Abu Da'ud*
4. Allama Bahr-ul-Uloom of Firangi Mahal writes in *Rasael-el-Arakan* that since Friday congregational service is a means to the assemblage of Muslims, Imam Abu Yusuf was opposed to several Friday services being held in the same town. Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Shafa'i are also of the same opinion on the ground that if several congregations were permitted on Friday their collective significance would cease. But Imam Mohammad relates from Imam Abu Hanifa that multiplicity of congregations on Friday is perfectly legitimate. Two or even more Friday services can be held in a big town. This is held to be the last word in this matter and the general practice also is in keeping with it.

suffered a decline.[1]

Criterion of the Week

For the tired and restless man, pre-occupied with the needs and responsibilities of life, it was advisable that a day should be set apart on which he could re-equip himself inwardly and cleanse his heart of the impurities that might have collected therein during the week and acquire a fresh inspiration for prayer and devotion to the Almighty. He ought to make use of this day in such a way that its radiance and auspiciousness permeated through the rest of the days of the week and they all became a projection of it. Such a day (or time, if we may say so) is Friday in the week, *Shab-i-Qadr* in the month of Ramadan and month of Ramadan in the year.

As Allama Ibn-i-Qaiyim writes, "Friday is the day on which special and single-minded application to worship is called for. It enjoys a superiority over the rest of the week in other respects also. God has allocated a day for each community on which people can stay away from worldly activities and devote themselves to worship. Friday is a day of worship in the same way. Its place and importance in the week is the same as that of Ramadan in the year. The particular time of the acceptance of petitions and supplications that is in it is identical in nature to

1. In many parts of India and the world, specially in the rural areas, the congregation of Friday is the sole means of contact between Islam and the working classes like peasants and artisans. On this day they take special care to have a bath and make other preparations for the prayer. They learn about the doctrines and practices of Islam, the consciousness, of being a Muslim grows in them and they take pride in it and remain secure against the inroads of polytheism and idolatory by virtue of it. But for the congregational service of Friday a large majority of Muslims would have been swept away by the rising tide of Apostasy and got absorbed into the un-Islamic societies in which they live. For this very reason even some of the latter-day jurists of the Hanafi school have preferred not to adopt an attitude of narrowness and rigidity over it but be liberal and accommodating.

Shab-i-Qadr in the month of Ramadan. Thus, a person who spends the Friday in a befitting manner for him the other days of the week will also fall in line with it, a person who observes the month of Ramadan in the right spirit and keeps away from sinfulness and wrong-doing the rest of the year will turn out to be the same for him and a person who performs the Haj properly his whole life will be spent likewise. Friday is the criterion of the week, Ramadan the criterion of the year and the Haj the criterion of life. The good fortune to act virtuously and well depends of course, on the will of God."[1]

The Salat of the Two 'Ids

The annual festivals and other celebrations, in all nations and religious communities, have degenerated into occasions for revelry and self-gratification. Intemperate entertainment, merry-making and dissipation have become their main attributes and this has led to the destruction of their religious significance and sanctity. They have turned into the exact opposite of what they were intended to be.

With the two 'Ids, 'Idul Fitr and 'Idul Adha, however, it is different. These festivals which have been sanctioned for the Muslims by the Divine Law-Giver for their emotional satisfaction and in recognition of a fundamental human need are cast altogether in a religious and spiritual mould.[2] For instance, extra *Takbirs* are prescribed for the prayer-service of the 'Ids and in the end sermon is delivered. It is also preferable, though not necessary, to raise *Takbir* repeatedly while going to celebrate

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1. *Zad-ul-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 106
2. It is related by Anas bin Malik that when the Prophet arrived in Medina two special days were observed there for feasting and celebration. On enquiring about these festivals he was told that the people of Medina had been celebrating them as occasions of social entertainment since the days of Ignorance. The Prophet, thereupon, remarked that, "God has provided you with better festivals in place of them, i.e. 'Idul-Fitr and 'Idul Adha."

—*Abu-Da'ud*

the ·Id services. Alms-giving (known as *Sadqa-i-Fitr*) before the prayers of ·Idul Fitr and sacrifice of animals after the prayers of ·Idul Adha are an additional feature.

The underlying purpose of the ·Id prayers was that just as the Muslims met, once in a week, for the Friday congregational service they should also get together twice in a year in a wide, open maidan but as with the Friday service, about these, too, they fell a prey to indifference and lassitude and the ‘Id prayers began to be celebrated in all the mosques, big as well as small. Consequently, the ‘Id services also were deprived of their efficacy and many of the objects the *Shariat* had in view were lost. Writes Allama Ibn-i-Qaiyim :

"The Prophet used to offer the prayers of ·Id in the *Musalla*"[1] which is situated at the eastern gate of Medina. This is the place where the pilgrims used to dismount from their camels. He offered the *Salat* of ·Id in his own mosque only once when it was raining (if the authenticity of the Tradition mentioned in *Abu Da'ud* and *Ibn-i-Maja* is not questioned). The normal practice, in any case, was that the Prophet offered up the ‘Id prayers in the *Musalla*.'[2]

Hazrat Shah Waliullah has the following remarks to offer on the special significance of the two ·Ids :

"For every community a congregation is needed in which all its members can take part for the display of their strength and solidarity. Hence, for the ‘Ids it has been made commendable for all Muslims, even women and children, to come and join the congregation. The women and children are advised to participate in it from a place set apart for them outside the *Musalla*.

"The holy Prophet, further, used to adopt one route for going to the *Musalla* and another for returning from there so that the spectacle of the glory of Islam could be seen by people living along both the routes."[3]

1. The place, usually a mosque, where the ‘Id prayers are offered
2. *Zad-ul-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, p. 119
3. *Hujjat*, Vol. II, p. 23

Safeguard against Confusion, Innovation and Misrepresentation.

Friday and the congregational prayer service have played a notable part in the security and preservation of faith, in the maintenance of the stability of the foundations of the *Shariat* and in the survival of the religious environment bequeathed by the sacred Prophet to his illustrious Companions. Thanks to them, Islam has remained protected against pollution, distortion and misrepresentation and succeeded in avoiding the fate of being reduced to a child's play. Had the Muslims given up these two things—Friday and the congregational service—and started offering up their prayers at home it would have become impossible to recognise their *Salat* today; or, at least, it would have lost much of its original form and character and all sorts of variations would have been introduced in it. Various types of *Salat* would have now been in vogue among the Muslims and just as their social and cultural life presents a different picture from place to place their prayers, too, would have accepted innumerable local influences and like the followers of Judaism and Christianity and of the Polytheistic faiths of India they too would have been celebrating their *Salat* in a different manner in different towns and countries. Congregational service, therefore, is a most important means to the promotion and safeguarding of uniformity and strict observance of rules in worship.

On account of these and many other considerations, which are known only to God, a prayer offered in congregation is held to be much superior to the one offered individually. Hazrat Abu Huraira relates from the Prophet that: "The *Salat* celebrated congregationally is twenty-five times more valuable than the one celebrated at home or in the shop for when a Muslim performs the ablution for it, and performs it well, and goes to the mosque solely with the object of saying his prayer his status is raised by one degree and a sin is forgiven at each step. When he begins the prayer the angels send salutations and blessings of the Lord upon him as long as he remains on the prayer-mat

and say, 'O Lord! Bestow Thy Peace and Blessings upon him and treat him with Mercy. Moreover, the time a devotee spends in waiting for the service to begin is deemed to have been spent in the service itself."[1] It is related by Hazrat Ibn-i-Omar that the holy Prophet once said, "A Namaz (or *Salat*) offered up in congregation is twenty-seven times superior to that offered individually."[2]

Salat in Other Religions

Before we examined the other types of *Salat* in Islam (that is, those belonging to the non-obligatory class) it would be better to enquire into the modes of ritualistic worship prevalent in religions that thrived in the world before the advent of Islam and are still in existence, though due to the overgrowth of ideas and multiplicity of interpretations, it is almost impossible to present an accurate and clear-cut picture of them like that of the Islamic *Salat*. Yet an objective and unbiased study will enable us to realise more adequately the true magnitude of the boon of Islam and the real worth and importance of its commands and precepts. We can also obtain from it an idea of the permanence and intactness of the Islamic teachings and the way they have remained safe and protected against perversion, alteration and misconstruction in spite of the vicissitudes of time and the large number of peoples and countries among which they have flourished.

Judaism

The record of the rules, form and method of worship, as available in Jewish religious literature, is so vague and confusing that no definite pattern of worship emerges from it about which it can be said that it was followed by the Jews everywhere. Contrary to what we see in Islam, the concept, design and regulations of ritualistic worship in Judaism have been changing

1. *Sehah-i-Sitta* with the exception of *Nissai*
2. *Muatta, Bukhari, Tirmidhi* and *Nissai*

constantly, and even now the forces of modernisation and reform are at work in them. It is not possible for a researchist or a historian to trace the original form that was followed by the Prophets raised up among the Israelites and the Jewish monks and ecclesiastical scholars of the olden days. Here we will reproduce an extract from Samuel Cohon, Professor of Theology at the Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati in Ohio. It reads :[1]

"Though not explicitly commanded in the Torah—since the customary form of ancient worship was sacrificial[2]—prayer has ever figured as a means of communion with God. While the prophets occasionally inveighed against the sacrificial cult, they lived lives of aspiration and prayer. Jeremiah, for example, repeatedly sought refuge from life's hardships in confesssions before God and in supplications. He counselled the exiles in Babylonia to practise the presence of God by means of prayer (Jer.29 : 12-13). The psalmists and the early Hasidim continued the prophetic traditions o prayer. Their piety provided the materials and fashioned the forms for Jewish private and public prayer.

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1. Cohon, S. S. : *Judaism*, pp. 116-17
2. In the Quran, however, ample evidence is found of the existence of regular worship among the Israelites and it appears that their Prophets and virtuous men observed it dutifully. Of Prophets Ibrahim (Abraham), Ishaq (Issac) and Yaqoob (Jacob) it is said, for instance, in *Sura-i-Ambia* that : *And We made them chiefs who guide by Our Command, and We inspired in them the doing of good deeds and the right establishment of worship and the giving of alms, and they were worshippers of Us (alone).* In *Sura-i-Mariyam*, Hazrat Isa's (Jesus Christ's) own words read as follows : *And Allah hath made me blessed wheresoever I may be, and hath enjoined upon me prayer and alms-giving so long as I remain alive.* Similarly, in *Sura-i-Aal-i-Imran*, it is set forth : *O Mary ! Be obedient to thy Lord, prostrate thyself and bow with those who bow (in worship).*

   It seems that the Israelites had become neglectful of prayer at an early stage of their career and ultimately they ruined it. Thus, it is stated in *Sura-i-Mariyam* that : *Now there hath succeeded them a later generation who have ruined worship and have followed lusts. But they will meet deception.*

"The Rabbis, endeavouring to discover a basis for prayer in the Torah, found it implied in the Deuteronomic monition : 'To love the Lord, your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul' (10-12).

"The nature of Jewish prayer is partly disclosed by the terms employed in Hebrew for prayer. The most general word is *Tephillah*, from the root *palal* (Ps. 106:30), to intervene, to interpose, connoting also the idea of arbitration and judgement as well as of intercession and prayer. Goldziher, accordingly, took the original meaning of *Tephillah* to be 'invocation of God as judge'. It is a form of judgement to which a person subjects himself in the presence of God.

"Praying three times a day which came to be the practice of the pious during Temple times (Ps. 55 : 17 ; Dan. 6 : 10), was not turned into a standing institution for both private and public devotion The time and the form of these services (shaharit, minhal, and maarib) on week days and the additional (musaph) service on the Sabbath, New Moon and Holy Days, as well as the fifth (neilah) on Yom Kippur, were made to correspond to the public sacrifices at the Temple."[1]

"Traditional Jewish worship is marked by the separation of the sexes, by the covering of the head, bowing, standing during certain prayers and taking three steps backwards at the end of the Amidah and Kaddish[2].............During the morning devotions on week days, whether public or private, phylacteries (tephillin) and prayer-shawls (tallit) are worn by males generally above the age of thirteen. The prayer-shawls are worn on the Sabbath and Holy Days as well. On fast days men remove their shoes during worship. On Yom Kippur they also wear a kittel (a white linen gown, which serves them ultimately as a shroud)."[3]

1. Cohon, S. S. : *Judaism*, p. 298.
2. Perhaps *Sajda* (touching the ground with the forehead) was not included in the Jewish worship for the Quran speaks only of *Ruku* (bowing) while referring to their prayer : *And bow with those who bow (in worship).*
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 358-59

"Judaism recognises on distinction between laity and priesthood and any Jew may conduct the public service at the synagogue."[1]

"Reform Judaism, with its emphasis on the aesthetic, restrained still more the spontaneous bodily reponses in worship and has abandoned the use of special galleries for women as well as the practice of covering the head and of wearing the tallit. The fact that Reform practically limited public service to the Sabbath and Holy Days automatically did away with the use of tephillin. The postures which it has preserved are limited to the rising during certain parts of the services, to silence during private meditations, and bowing the head during the adoration and the closing benediction".[2]

"Of greatest prominence in religious worship is the musical accompaniment. Orthodox Jewish worship derives its special character from the chant in prayer and in reading of Scripture... As the music and choir directors, for the most part, have been non-Jews they neglected the distinctive character of Jewish song......Much of the mischief is due to the desire on the part of the music leaders to provide the congregations with musical entertainment instead of aiding them in devotion."[3]

The foregoing description of worship in Judaism is confirmed by what is contained in the Jewish Encyclopedia. We will here reproduce the following extracts from it.[4]

"Preparations, based on 'Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel', were made before prayers. The pious of ancient times occupied one hour in preparation for prayer. Ezra's ordinance required scrupulous washing of the body immediately before prayer. One must be properly attired......The Amidah is recited standing (whence the term) and facing the Holy Land."

"One shall not mount a platform, but shall pray from a lowly position. The worshipper at Amidah should keep his feet

1. *Ibid.*, p. 360
2. Cohon, S. S. : *Judaism*, p. 359
3. *Ibid.*, p. 360
4. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. X, pp. 166-69

together, 'straight' as do the angels. He shall spread out and raise his hands toward the Holy King ; he shall direct his eyes downward and his heart upward. During a benediction he shall bow down, and then arise at the mention of God's name. At the end of the Amidah the worshipper steps back three paces and bows to the right and to the left.........this resembles to the custom followed in taking leave of royalty in ancient times."

"The general prayers are generally concluded in congregation of not less than ten adults; and it is highly commendable to pray in public. Women as well as men are under obligation to pray. Girls are discouraged from praying."

"The authorship and compilation of the prayers, at least of the Shema and its benedictions, are credited to 120 elders, among them more than 80 prophets.........It is not known whether the prayers were originally taught orally or were committed formally to writing; evidently they were recited by the people from the memory for a long time, perhaps as late as the geonic period."

"R. Johanan says one may pray all day. Others are of the opinion that the permissible number of prayers is limited to three, and on a fast day to four, including Neilah. R. Samuel b. Nahamani says the three prayers are for the three changes in the day, sunrise, noon, sunset."

Christianity : Roman Catholic Church

Prayer in Christianity was formulated for the first time in the 4th Century,[1] and since then the Committee of the Vatican has been making alterations in it and keeping the Catholic world informed of the alterations. The central body of the

1. In the paper on Worship in Christianity in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* it is said that Jesus used to participate with the Jews in their prayer-services and he also attended the services, held in the Temple. The ancient Christian priests also followed the same path Worship in Christianity was based on the same pattern on which the first generation of the Christians had been brought up. It was not the Church which severed its relations with Judaism but Judaism that expelled Christianity.

Church is empowered to enact reforms in worship which it deems desirable.

Below we will give an example of the "official" or conventional Catholic prayer adapted from the latest bulletin of St. Paul's Publications entitled, 'The Sacrifice of the Mass'.

As the celebrant enters, the congregation rises out of respect for the minister of God. The celebrant then, by way of formulating the intention to celebrate the prayer-service, says, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. I will go to the altar of God." At this stage a dialogue takes place between the celebrant and the worshippers which is related to the praise and glorification of the Lord.

The celebrant then, says: "I confess to almighty God, to blessed Mary, ever Virgin, to blessed Michael, the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, to all the saints and to you, brethren, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore, I beseech Mary, ever Virgin, blessed Michael, the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, all the saints, and you brethren to pray to the Lord, our God, for me."

The congregation prays for the celebrant and the celebrant says, "Amen"! After it, the congregation repeats the confessional prayer and the celebrant prays for them to be forgiven of their sins and everyone says, "Amen"! This is followed by another dialogue between the celebrant and the faithful concerning Divine Mercy and Benevolence.

The priest then ascends and recites the prayer: "We beg you, O Lord, by the merits of your saints whose relics are here, and of all the saints, to grant me forgiveness of all my sins. Amen". The priest says, "Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy." He follows it up with the incantation, "May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life."

The hymn 'Gloria', sung during the service, is a song of praise and adoration. In it the words, "Almighty God and

Father", and "Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father," occur repeatedly, and Christ is referred to as the "Lamb of God," and it is said that he takes away the sins of the world and is seated at the right hand of the Father. Entreaties of mercy and forgiveness are made to him and it is affirmed that he alone is the Holy One, the Lord, and the most High.

A passage from the Holy Gospel is also read by the priest during which the congregation remains standing.

The weekly Sunday service of the Catholic Church is distinguished from the other services by the fact that in it the deacon (or priest) delivers a sermon and renews the profession of faith, affirming about Christ that he is the only Son of God, begotten by Him, and it is through him that all things were made. He is God from God, Light from Light, begotten one in Being with the Father who came down from heaven "for us men and for our salvation." The congregation kneels down at it and solemnly affirms its faith in the crucifixion under Pontius Pilate, the ascension, the Catholic Church, the baptism and the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.

In conclusion the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (the Eucharist) is held. Its origin is traced to an ancient custom which was that when people came to the Church they brought bread and wine with them and placed them at the altar. The priest used to rub some wine on the bread. It was believed that the bread and wine turned into the flesh and blood of Christ and the flesh and blood of Christ permeated into those who ate and drank the consecrated bread and wine. The place of these offerings has now been taken by money which the faithful present to the priest but the priest still distributes the bread among participants as a part of the liturgy of the Eucharist.

The mass comes to an end with a short prayer after which the worshippers disperse.

Protestants

The prayer of the Protestants, including those belonging to the Methodist and Anglican Churches, is quite similar to

that of the Roman Catholics in repentance, confession, affirmation of faith, supplication and adoration and reading of the gospel. But the method of conducting it and the form of words which go to make it are different.

Firstly, Latin is not used in it. Secondly, all the texts are in the form of psalms and hymns with set tunes and annotations. Another remarkab'e feature is that due regard is paid to the maintenance of peace and silence at the time of God-remembrance and passages dealing explicitly with the Divinity of Christ have been deleted. In some prayers, mood of serenity and reflection is manifest as in the following:

> Our Heavenly Father, who by Thy love hast made us, and through Thy love hast kept us, and in Thy love wouldest make us perfect, we humbly confess that we have not loved Thee with all our heart and soul and mind and strength, and that we have not loved one another as Christ hath loved us. Thy life is within our souls, but our selfishness has hindered Thee. We have not lived by faith. We have resisted Thy Spirit. We have neglected Thine inspirations. Forgive what we have been; help us to amend what we are; and in Thy spirit direct what we shall be; that Thou mayest come into the full glory of Thy creation, in us and in all men, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.[1]

In the Anglican churches bells are rung before the commencement of the service to announce that the time for prayer has come. A portion selected from the Bible is read and the Confession is sung by a choir.

On special occasions the Eucharist is also held and the followers of the Anglican Church believe that by observing the sacrament they purify their souls.

Hinduism

A most conspicuous feature of worship in Hinduism is

1. The Methodist Hymnal (Methodist Book Concern), p. 510

diversity. In form and method, and ceremony and ritual, it differs from caste to caste and region to region. Anyone endeavouring to discover its original plan and nature is sure to find himself caught in a labyrinth of beliefs, customs and practices. It is, in fact. true with all Indian creeds, usages and conceptions and also explains the difficulty experienced by the law-givers, priests and scholars of the Hindu faith in their attempts to give a precise definition of the term 'Hindu' itself.

A great deal of confusion exists in Hindu worship. There is too much of flexibility in it. Its mode and manner differs and its rules and stipulations are vague and ambiguous. Here neither uniformity of design is observed nor unity of doctrine. A complete picture, therefore, is not available in any single volume nor has any scholar of Hindu religious philosophy succeeded in furnishing an accurate description of it. The nearest approach to it which can be said to represent the forms of worship common to the largest part of India is found in Prof. Mahadevan's commendable work, 'The Outlines of Hinduism'. Dilating upon the structure of worship in the Hindu religion he writes ;[1]

"The images of Vishnu and of his incarnations, and the images of Siva and Sakti are the popular idols that are worshipped both in the temples and the households. The most democratic of deities having innumerable representations, however, are Krsua in the North and Kartikeya (son of Siva and Parvati) in the South. The Hindu masses frequent temples dedicated to these deities without any distinction and see the same god and adore him. In his home, the Hindu treats the deity as he would an honoured guest, and to the temple he goes with flowers and fruits to pay homage to the King of Kings.

"The mode of worship (Puja) is a replica of the services that are usually rendered to a beloved guest or an honoured King. The presence of the deity is invoked (avahana) ; a seat is offered (asana) ; the feet are washed (padya) ; an offering of sandal wood, paste and rice as a sign of respect is made (arghya) ;

1. Pp. 48-50

the sacred thread is put on the idol (upavita); sandal wood paste is smeared (chandana); flowers (puspa) are offered; incense (dhupa) is burned; the lamps (dipa) are waved; food (naivedya) is offered; and then betel (tambula) and camphor (nirajana) is burned and gold is given as a gift (suvarna-puspa); and, finally, the Deity is bidden farewell to (visarjana).

"In the temples the priest is expected to attend on the Deity as he would on a King. The King of Kings is roused from sleep with music early in the morning. Then after the ceremonial bath he is dressed in royal robes and decked with ornaments and flowers. Artistic lamps are waved before Him. Food is offered at regular intervals. The King holds His Daily Court, gives audience to His devotees, hears their complaints and bestows on them His grace. On festive occasions he goes out in state with all the regalia befitting the King of Kings. This mystery play God enacts in all the temples of India for enticing those who are not enlightened from their humdrum ways of life that lead only into regions of blinding darkness."

A more elaborate study of worship in Hinduisim has been attempted by Louis Renan who says[1]:

"Unknown in ancient periods, the cult of the idol gained moment un with the development of monumental iconography. To fashion the idol of a god, to instal it in the sanctuary, to treat it as 'animated', to anoint it: all of these became major rites. Worship, or puja, is the central point of religious activity. The rite consists of welcoming the god as a distinguished guest. Bathing the god, dressing him, adorning him and applying scent, feeding him, putting flowers around him, and worshipping him with moving flames accompanied by music and song: such are some of the essential features of the rite. The idol is taken out of the temple in a procession which furnishes the occasion for scenes which mingle mythology with themes of folk-lore. Taking place in the temple, this type of ceremony is public; it carries no obligation for the individual. For some, perhaps for

1. Renan, Louis: Hinduism, pp. 30-33

the majority, the idol is the god himself, and we can classify this as idolatory ; for others, symbolical values are true values and idol is nothing more than what it is in any form of cult in which the sacred is incarnate in some concrete form.

"Descended from the household hearth of olden days, the temple may range from the modest village sanctuary with its crude idols to the religious cities which encompass within their walls a whole cycle of activities and the mountain temples which aim to reproduce the cosmic mountain Maru, pivot of the world. The temple is dedicated to a particular god. The image of this god is accompanied by a particular attribute which can be autonomous..........

"The worshipper, at least in the elaborate forms of cult, submits himself to considerable preparation : preliminary ablutions food restrictions which may extend to the fast, corporal postures and gestures of the fingers (mudra), control of the breath, 'possession' (nyasa) by the god of the body of the worshipper, etc............

"Prayer consists of the silent recitation (japa) of sacred formulae (mantra) which are repeated indefinitely. The mantra are composed of from one to a hundred or more syllables. Here we find a tribute to the word as form. for many of the syllables have no meaning while others consist of a simple mention of the divine name, such as 'Ram (a) ! Ram (a) !' This type of prayer is an aid to mental concentration and is thought to bring about the desired effects of protection, fulfilment of promise or expiatory virtue.

"Other elements of personal worship are the study of the Scriptures, and above all, meditation. Strengthened by the Yoga exercises, meditation can lead to such a proxysm of tension that excitement can accomplish the ultimate aim proposed in all Indian religious thought : of state of union with the Absolute.

"Those religious practices performed at home are the only ones which are relatively obligatory. Prayer three times a day (at morning, noon and evening) is accompanied by offerings to

the gods, to sages and to ancestors."

Two things will appear to be common to all types of worship among the Hindus, to whatever part of the country they belong, of which one is an excessive fondness for music. A temple or any other place of worship hardly exists in which singing and clapping is not done. Music is fundamental to the very nature of Hinduism and enjoys a place of foremost importance in the entire range of its activities. The Hindu philosophers and ecclesiastics have relied on it for evoking a sympathetic response in the hearts of the devotees and engendering the sentiments of love and devotion in them. In truth, it applies to all religions which have based themselves on human experience or come under the shadow of Polytheism or gone through a process of change and alteration.

Of the Pagans of Mecca, for example, it is said in the Quran that:

> And their worship at the (Holy) House is naught but whistling and hand-clapping. (—viii : 35)

Be that as it may, if devotional music and song and ecstatic hand-clapping are, to any extent, helpful in arousing the feelings of love and tenderness among the worshippers, as their protagonists would say, these practices have, at the same time, done an irreparable harm to the purposes of reverence, peace and solemnity that are indispensable to Divine worship.

The other attribute shared universally by the Hindus is idol-worship. The Hindu religious thought, at all times, has stood firm by it and is insistent upon its usefulness as an aid to mental concentration. Even the great, Hindu reformer, Shankaracharya (who in the 6th century revived the Vedic faith after repelling the powerful onslaught of Buddhism), has advocated idolatory as unavoidable to the evolution of religious spirit.

"In this sense", says Prof. Ghate, "It may be truly said that Shankara did not attack or destroy idolatory, though with him it was always symbolism rather than idolatory. It may be easily understood how he condemned all ritualism and karma and at the same time defended the worship of popular gods.

"At one stage of its growth idolatory is a necessity of our nature. When the religious spirit is mature symbols are either given up or suffered to remain for their harmlessness."[1]

Whatever virtue Hindu religious thinkers may ascribe to idol-worship it is clear that it has proved to be highly detrimental to the concepts of Divine Unity and Monotheism. The devotees have practically resigned themselves in fealty and allegiance to the idols they venerate and have no other spiritual ambition than to live and die in that state. Even at the time of need and adversity they do not feel persuaded to turn to the Supreme Being, the Almighty, whom they describe as the ultimate object of their devotions. The advocates of idolatory claim that after a devotee has successfully gone through the transitional stage of image-worship he attains the goal of God-realisation and his prayers and supplications come to be animated with sincerity. But in actual practice such a happy outcome is very rare. In whole communities of idol-worshippers there are no more than a handful of persons who can be said to have arrived at that stage of spiritual maturity. The cry of anguish that had sprung to the lips of Hazrat Ibrahim, and has also been reproduced in the Quran, against the baneful influence of idolatory is of permanent relevance. It was: *My Lord! They (the idols) have led many of mankind astray*. The idols have decisively taken hold of their minds and led them away from the right path and from the boon and blessing of Divine worship.[2]

Sunnat, Nafl and Witr Prayers

We will now return to the theme of Islamic *Salat*. In *Salat* before and after *Fard* (obligatory) *Rak'ats*, some other *Rak'ats*

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1. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. XI, p. 189.
2. Maulana Manazir Ahsan Gilani has said that the Quranic verse quoted above means that the idols have swayed the minds of thousands of men and absorbed their attention so thoroughly that they scarcely get an opportunity of turning to the real Deity and establishing a direct relationship with Him.

are also offered which are called *Sunan-i-Ratiba*[1] in the terminology of Islam. These prayers are confirmed by the practice of the sacred Prophet who used to offer them up regularly. In relation to faith these are like the moat which is dug round a fortress or wall which is built around a city for its defence and protection. A person who pays attention to the *Sunnat Rak'ats* and keeps them up regularly will never be negligent about the *Fard Rok'ats.* He will, on the other hand, attach the greatest importance to them. Further, the *Sunnat Rak'ats* make up for what is left wanting in *Fard Rak'ats*[2].

It is narrated by Hazrat Ibn-i-Omar that "I have offered two *Rak'ats* before and after the *Zuhr* prayers, two *Rak'ats* after *Maghrib* and two after *Isha* with the Prophet at his house." He further tells that "Hazrat Hafsa once related to me that the sacred Prophet used to offer two light (supererogatory) *Rak ats* at the time of *Fajr.*"[3]

In another Tradition it occurs that "he who will offer twelve *(Sunnat) Rak'ats* at day and night, a mansion will be built for him in the Paradise—four before and two after *Zuhr*, two after *Maghrib*, two after *Isha* and two before *Fajr.*"[4]

It is related by Hazrat Ayesha that "a person who will consistently offer twelve *Rak'ats* of *Sunnat* God will build for him a mansion in Paradise—four *Rak'ats* before and two after *Zuhr*, two after *Maghrib*, two after *Isha* and two before *Fajr.*"[5]

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1. Meaning practices, apart from the obligatory duties, which are firmly established by the conduct of the Holy Prophet and a Muslim is expected to carry them out as a matter of religious obligation.
2. It is related by Hazrat Abu Huraira that the Prophet once said, "The first thing a person will be asked about in the Hereafter is *Salat*. If his *Salat* is of the right order he will be successful and if it is defective he will be lost. In case some deficiency is found in the *Fard* services God will say, 'Look if some *Nafl* prayers are mentioned in the balance-sheet of his deeds.' From these amends will be made for the deficiency, and the same is true of all the other deeds of man." (*—Tirmidhi*)
3. *Tirmidhi*
4. *Saheehain*
5. *Tirmidhi*

It is, further, related by Hazrat Ayesha that "the Prophet offered four *Rak'ats* before *Zuhr* at my house and then went out to lead the prayer-service and then he again offered two *Rak'ats* on his return. On coming back after leading the *Maghrib* prayers he used to offer two *Rak'ats* at home, then two *Rak'ats* at home after leading the *Isha* prayers and two also at *Fajr*."[1]

The Prophet celebrated the *Witr* service after *Isha* or *Tahajjud* and he never missed it even on a journey. It is related that he once said, "*Witr* is truth: whoever gave it up is not of us; *Witr* is truth; *Witr* is truth; *Witr* is truth: whoever gave it up is not of us."[2] He is also reported to have said, "Allah has bestowed on you the gift of another prayer which is better for you than the red camels.[3] It is *Witr*. Allah has placed it after the prayer-service of *Isha* till day-break."[4]

The most important among the *Sunnat* prayers are the two *Rak'ats* at *Fajr*. It is related by Hazrat Ayesha that "the Prophet was not more particular about anything after the obligatory duties than these two *Rak'ats* of *Fajr*."[5] It is also related by Hazrat Abu Huraira that the Prophet once said, "Do not abandon them even if horses trample upon you with their hooves."[6]

1. *Tirmidhi*
2. *Abu Da'ud*
3. In the olden days the Arabs placed a very high value on red camels.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Sahah-i-Sitta*
6. Allama Ibn-i-Qaiyyim writes that while travelling the Prophet was most careful, among the *Sunnat* services, about the *Sunnats* of *Fajr* and the *Witr*. He is not known to have paid a greater attention, during a journey, to any of the non-obligatory services than these. He also says that when the holy Companions undertook a journey they said the *Nafl* prayers before and after the *Fard* prayers. This is what is related about Hazrat Umar, Hazrat Ali, Abdullah bin Masood, Jabir, Anas, Ibn-i-Abbas and Abu Dhar. Ibn-i-Umar, however, preferred to say the *Nafl* prayers with *Witr* at night. By the known practice of the holy Prophet, also, it is borne out that he neither celebrated *Nafl* service before and after *Fard* (in a journey) nor advised against it. It is wholly supererogatory and not like *Sunnat-i-Ratiba*.

Multiformity

Salat does not absolve a man of his other responsibilities. It is not that by offering it up one gets a free hand in other spheres. Nor can the disregard of it be made good by any other act. It is the sword as well as the shield of a Muslim. It is the panacea for all his ills, a master key that can open any lock. It can remove any difficulty, avert any calamity and relieve any distress. There is, thus, a separate *Salat* for every need or adverse situation, such as, fear, drought and solar eclipse, for the seeking of Divine help or inspiration in taking a decision, for the fulfilment of a want and for getting ready for death or martyrdom.[1]

Conduct of the Pious Precursors

A Muslim is obliged to consider *Salat* to be his friend, companion and helper and to knock at the door of Divine Mercy through it whenever an ill-wind blows or the things threaten to go against him, and not to leave it till his petition is granted. The holy Companions and pious precursors looked upon it in the same spirit. They took the greatest pride in it and put a greater reliance on it than a soldier does on his sword, a rich man on his wealth or a child on his whimper. The *Namaz* (or *Salat*) had become a part of their existence, a second nature which came automatically to them. Whenever they were confronted with a vexing problem or a distressing situation developed they hurried to the *Salat* and sought refuge in it.

Such has been the way with the *Imams*, spiritualists, holy men and reformers of Islam and Muslims during the entire course

1. Imam Bukhari has mentioned it on the authority of Hazrat Abu Huraira that when Hazrat Khubaib was being taken out of the precincts of Haram for execution he asked for permission to offer two *Rak'ats* of *Salat*. The permission was granted to him and he celebrated the service. Afterwards, he said to his captors that he would have offered more *Rak'ats* had he not feared that they would consider him to be a coward (who was thereby trying to delay the hour of his death). Since then the practice got established among the Muslims.

of history. It is said about Sheikhul Islam Ibn-i-Taimiya that when he was caught in a predicament and could not make up his mind he would go to a secluded mosque and offer the *Salat* and place his forehead on the ground and remain in that state for a long time and cry with great depth of feeling, "O Teacher and Preceptor of Ibrahim! Teach this science to me also". Ibn-i-Taimiya used to derive much satisfaction from the thought that he was a beggar at the door of the Almighty and that it was the calling and avocation of his ancestors which had been handed down to him through the generations. Sometimes, he also recited the following verse during his entreaties:

> I am a beggar, a beggar am I,
> So were my ancestors,
> Beggars at Thy door.

Tahajjud[1]

The prayer of *Tahajjud* is characteristically beneficial in the development of spiritual endurance and for lending warmth and awareness to the heart. The Quran has commended it again and again to the believers and the laudatory manner in which it speaks of those who offer it denotes that it is no less important than a *Fard* prayer. The holy Prophet used to say it in all circumstances.[2] A number of Muslim theologists have, on the basis of it expressed the view that for him it was an obligatory prayer.[3]

1. A form of *Salat* said during the later part of the night.
2. Allama Ibn-i-Qaiyyim tells that the holy Prophet never missed the prayer of *Tahajjud*, whether he was on a journey or staying at home. When he was overcome with sleep or illness he said twelve *Rak'ats* during the day.
3. Allama Bahrul Uloom writes that there is a difference of opinion among Ulema over the question whether *Tahajjud* was an obligatory prayer for the Prophet or supererogatory. A group of the Ulema perfers the former view which is also shared by the Purists and, as Qastalani tells, some Ulama of the Shaf'ai school, too, are in agreement with it. But the consensus of opinion is in favour of the latter point of view.
   (—*Rasaei-ul-Arkan*, p. 134).

Says the Quran :

O thou wrapped up in thy raiment !

Keep vigil the night long (in prayer), save a little—a half thereof, or abate a little thereof or add a little thereto—and recite the Quran in measure, for soon We shall send down to thee a weighty Message. Truly the rising by night is most potent for governing (the soul), and most suitable for framing the word (of Prayer and Praise). Lo ! thou hast by day a chain of business. So remember the name of thy Lord and devote thyself with a complete devotion—Lord of the East and the West ; there is no God save Him ; so choose thou Him alone for thy defender.

(—lxxiii : 1-9)

And some part of the night awake for it (i. e. *Tahajjud*), a largess for thee. It may be that thy Lord will raise thee to a praised estate. (—xvii : 79)

The sacred Prophet had a special fondness for *Tahajjud*. It was during this prayer that his feet used to swell up due to long stretches of standing. It is related by Mughira bin Sh'oba that "the Prophet remained standing for such a long time in the *Salat* (of *Tahajjud*) that his feet swelled. It was said to him, 'Allah has forgiven all your sins, of the past as well as the future. (Why, then, should you exert yourself so excessively in prayer ?) The Prophet replied, 'Should I not be a grateful bondman' ?"[1] Similarly, Hazrat Ayesha relates that once the Prophet spent a whole night over a single verse of the Quran.

Those who are familiar with the details of the lives of holy Companions and have a good grasp of the Traditions, Islamic history and biography of the Prophet will be knowing how zealously vigilant the Companions were in the observance of *Tahajjud*. It had become a distinguishing feature of their programme of life, so much so that in the court of Emperor Heraclius it was said of them that "they were worshippers by night and horsemen by day."

1. *Bukhari* and *Muslim*.

Writes Imam Hasan Basri, than whom who could be knowing more about the holy Companions, "When the Call of Truth came to the believers they affirmed it whole-heartedly and the conviction of it sank into the depths of their souls. Not only did their hearts but their bodies, minds and eyes also bowed in submission. By God, if you had seen them you would have thought that they were a people who had beheld everything with their own eyes. They were not like the people of falsehood, the skeptics and the wranglers. They heard the Word of God and submitted. God has praised them in these words in the Quran.

> The (faithful) slaves of the Beneficent are they who walk upon the earth modestly......... And who spend the night before their Lord, prostrate and standing.
>
> (—xxv : 63-64)

"These are the men who remain standing erect (in prayer) for the sake of God and cover, their faces with dust, tears run down whose cheeks and in whose hearts the fear of God is embedded."

The Imam goes on to add, "There must have been something for which they had deprived themselves of the sleep of the nights and which made their hearts tremble with the fear of God."[1]

The *Salat* of *Tahajjud* had become the regular practice and distinguishing mark of all virtuous and godly men, theologists, crusaders, reformers and preachers. They obtained the energy, or, in other words, the fuel for the whole day's work from this sublime form of night-watching. One who had not seen them at their devotions in the dark and silent hours of the night, when the world was asleep, could never know from where did their strength and enthusiasm come and what held the secret of their almost superhuman capacity to endure cheerfully, day in and day out, the privations and hardships of religious preaching and endeavour. Even the Ulema whom some misguided critics describe as *Ulema-i-Zahir*[2] and lay the charge of rigidity and

1. *Qayam-ul-Lail.*
2. Meaning, the Formalists.

sternness at their door were in the habit of celebrating the praises of Allah, remembering His Names and saying the *Salat* of *Tahajjud* regularly at night. We can imagine from it the state of the Ulema who are known for the profusion of their prayers, and for their piety and dedication to the cause of religious and spiritual guidance, uplift, and propagation, such as, Hazrat Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, Sheikh Shahabuddin Seharwardy, Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi known as Mujaddid Alf-Thani and Hazrat Syed Ahmad Shaheed.

Allama Ibn-i-Qaiyyim has furnished the following testimony about his mentor, Ibn-i-Taimiya: "Once Sheikhul Islam, after completing *Salat* of *Fajr*, sat for *Zikr*[1] till it was mid-day. He, then, turned towards me and remarked, 'This is my breakfast. If I do not take this nourishment I will become weak and listless (or something to this effect)."[2]

The same was true of Allama Ibn-i-Qaiyyim himself. It has been observed by Ibn-i-Kathir that "as far as I know there is no one at present who can be said to be more devout than him. He had his own way of offering the *Salat*. He said very long prayers and spent a long time in *Ruku* and *Sajda*. Many of his friends did not approve of it, but he did not care."[3]

Allama Ibn-i-Rajab writes about Allama Ibn-i-Qaiyyim that "he had reached the limit in worship, in celebration of *Tahajjud* and in the prolongation of *Salat*. He had a special aptitude for *Zikr* and repentance. He lived in a world of his own as far as giving expression to one's humbleness and throwing oneself at the Divine doorstep, begging and beseeching were concerned. I have not seen the like of him in these matters."[4]

Still more strange in the case of Allama Ibn-i-Jauzi who is supposed to be a front-rank critic of puritanism. Of him his grandson, Abul Muzaffar writes, "He used to complete a recitation

1. Recitation of the Namaz, Attributes and Praises of God.
2. *Alwabil-es-Saiyyib*, p. 719.
3. *Al-Bidayah Wan-Nihayah*, Vol. 14, p. 335
4. *Ibid.*

of the Quran in seven days. Ibn-i-Najjar says that he had been blessed with an ample share of wholesomeness of nature, love for hymning the praises of Lord and supplication. According to Ibn-ul-Qadesi he was regular in the *Tahajjud* and never missed the *Zikr*."[1]

All the spiritual leaders, mentors, scholars and reformers who have been of some service to Millat, morally and religiously, and whose deeds and literary endeavours have been rewarded by God with popularity and permanence have maintained the same standard of devoutness and worshipfulness. They all were devoted worshippers of the Lord, spending their nights in prayer or getting up very early in the morning to glorify His Name. During the bygone days these values were cherished by the Millat and, even now, are its guide-posts. Awareness has not ever been born out of negligence, nor life out of death, nor refinement out of vulgarity, nor movement out of stagnation. And nor shall it ever be so.

> That was the way of Allah in the case of those who passed away of old ; thou wilt not find for the way of Allah aught of power to change. (—xxxiii ; 62)

Fruits

The place the regular celebration of *Salat* (in form as well as spirit), the inclination for worship and the profusion of supererogatory prayers occupy in the spiritual conditioning of man, in the purification of his soul and in the forging of a link with the celestial world is not equalled by any other act. As a Tradition of the holy Prophet reads: "You will see the Lord as you are seeing it,[2] clearly and without a shadow of doubt. So if you can manage it, be careful not to miss the *Salat* which falls before the rising and before the setting of the sun". The Prophet is, then, reported to have recited the following verse of the Quran:

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1. *Et-Tajul Mukallal*
2. The Prophet is reported to have pointed at the moon while he spoke these words.

Celebrate the praises of thy Lord ere the rising of the sun and ere the going down thereof.[1] (—xx : 130)

It is related by Hazrat Abu Huraira that the Prophet once said to Hazrat Bilal at the time of *Fajr* "Tell me about your act from which you expect the most in your Islam for I have heard the sound of your footsteps in heaven." "I have done nothing", replied Hazrat Bilal, "which could give me hope except that when I perform the *Wadu* in any part of the day or night I try to offer as much of *Salat* with it as I can."[2]

Prayers, both obligatory and optional, are extremely efficacious in the promotion of the love of God and for the earning of Divine Mercy and Benediction. The holy Companion who approached the Prophet with the request that he may be blessed with his companionship in the Garden of Eternal Bliss was thus advised to devote as much of his time as he could to prostation and supererogatory prayers. It is related by an attendant of the sacred Prophet, Abu Faras Rabiya Ibn-i-Kuaib el-Aslami, that "I used to attend on the Prophet in the night and look after his *Wadu* and other needs. One day the Prophet told me to ask for something and I said that I wanted his company in Heaven. The Prophet, thereupon, remarked, 'Then help me with abundance in prostration'."[3]

Feelings of love and fear of God and humbleness and submission are generated in a man's heart by worship. He gets resigned to the Divine Will and attains freedom from the hold of the animal appetites that are at the root of all evil and instransigence and the chief source of corruption and injustice.

It has been made known by God through one of the revealed Traditions that "among the things through which My bondsman strives to gain access unto Me the most precious in My sight are the obligatory duties. My bondsman further draws closer to me through supererogatory prayers till I begin to love him,

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1. *Bukhari* and *Muslim*
2. *Bukhari*
3. *Muslim*

and, when I love him, I become the ear with which he hears, the eye with which he sees, the arm by which he defends himself and the leg on which he moves. When he beseeches Me for anything I grant it to him and when he seeks My refuge I, verily, give him refuge."[1]

Grades

There is nothing dead or mechanical about *Salat*. It is not a soulless ritual, frozen into rigidity, in which there is no scope for development and everyone is compelled to stay at the same level. On the contrary, its field is very vast in which the devotee is carried forward from state to state, from advancement to perfection and from perfection to heights that are beyond the imagination of man. In it, the position of one is different from that of the other. The grade varies from person to person. A *Salat* of negligence and ignorance cannot be treated as equal to that of attention and awareness. In the same way, the *Salat* of the general body of Muslims cannot match the *Namaz* of the enlightened men of God in virtue and excellence. It is also not necessary that a devotee always maintained the same standard and *Salat* he offered today was identical in quality to what he had offered up yesterday or a few months or years earlier.

Thus, we find that two categories of *Salat* are mentioned in the Quran, praiseworthy and blameworthy. Of the later type of *Salat* it says :

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1. Commenting on this Tradition Allama Ibne Hajar Asqalani remarks after referring to the opinions expressed by some sufi saints and men of exceptional spirituality, that it denotes complete self-surrender and resignation beyond which there no other stage in man's spiritual evolution. This state is reached when a devotee loses his identity in God so wholly and completely that he begins to see with His eyes and no trace of his own individuality remains. He perceives the presence of God along with his own presence and the operation of God's Will in his own wish or desire and to him it seems to be a reality which he may have observed for himself that God is seeing him all the time and His eye is permanently on his being.

(*Fath-el-Bari*, Vol. xi, p. 296).

> Ah, woe unto worshippers who are heedless of their prayer, (and) who are hypocrites and refuse even small kindnesses. (—cvii : 4-7)

And, of the former :

> Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers. (—xxiii : 1-2)

The holy Prophet, also, has spoken of two kinds of *Salat*, one of reverence, sincerity and humbleness and the other of negligence, hurry and carelessness. Concerning the *Salat* of the first category Uthman bin 'Affan relates that "he (the Prophet) performed the *Wadu*, and performed it well, and, then, he remarked, 'He who performs the *Wadu* like me and celebrates two *Rak'ats* of *Salat* in such a way that he thinks of nothing else (during it), all his previous sins will be forgiven."[1]

It is related by Hazrat Uqba bin 'Aamir that the Prophet once said, "Paradise becomes the birthright of a Muslim who performs the *Wadu* properly and then stands up and offers two *Rak'ats* of *Salat* and remains attentive in it both with his face and his heart."[2]

About the *Salat* of the other kind, it is related by 'Ammar bin Yasir that once he heard the Prophet saying, "A person completes his *Salat* and yet only one-tenth, and, sometimes, one-ninth, one-eighth, one-seventh, one-sixth, one-fifth, one-fourth, one-third or one-half of it comes to his lot."[3]

It is, again, related that the Prophet once said, "The worst of men is he who steals his *Salat*." The holy Companions, thereupon, asked, "O Prophet of God ! How can a person steal his own *Salat*?" The Prophet replied, "He neither performs *Wadu* properly nor *Sajda*."[4]

It is related by Hazrat Anas that the Prophet once said, "He is a hypocrite who keeps on looking at the sun till it turns pale

1. *Bukhari* and *Muslim*
2. *Muslim*
3. *Abu Da'ud*
4. *Nissai*

and comes between the two horns of the Devil and then gets up and hurriedly offers up four *Rak'ats* of *Salat* like a hen pecking at the grain in which the remembrance of God is only nominal."[1]

In *Salat* the grades of the devotees are different. The *Salat* of one devotee cannot be judged by the *Salat* of the other. The *Salat* of the sacred Prophet was of the highest order, higher, superior and more perfect than that of any one, and it also held the greatest weight in the Scales of God. Closest to his *Salat* was the *Salat* of Hazrat Abu Bakr. It was for this reason that Hazrat Abu Bakr was commanded by the holy Prophet, during his last illness, to lead the prayer-service in his place though Hazrat Ayesha[2] had suggested the name of Hazrat Omar. But the Prophet insisted on it and, so it was done.

Further, there is no better measuring-yard of one's place and position in Islam than *Salat.* The quality of a person's prayers tells more about his inner state than anyother thing. Thus, all the outstanding personalities of Islam, whose names are still cherished in history, have attained that lofty position and immortality by paying the greatest attention to *Salat* and carrying it to the highest stage of perfection which, in the Islamic parlance, is referred to as *Ihsan.*

After the Passing Away of the Prophet

Like the sun, the rays of Prophecy and Apostleship fell on every nook and corner of the world, lending light and warmth to the hearts everywhere. Consequently, the bond between the Lord and his bondsmen used to be established, quickly and readily, over vast areas of land and in large segments of humanity, and those on whom was His favour rose from the depths of darkness and ignorance to the heights of knowledge, enlightenment and devotion. The luminous Order of the Divine Apostles continued to operate in the world till, after a brief interruption, Prophet Mohammad (Peace and Blessing of God be upon whom)

1. *Bukhari*
2. The Prophet's wife and Hazrat Abu Bakr's daughter.

was raised up. Among all the Apostles of God, in him we had the ideal personality and the scope of his message was universal. There was the touch of alchemy about his company. Lives of those who came into contact with him were transformed all of a sudden. Bitterness, rancour and hostility gave place to unity, friendship and affection and defiance of God and intransigence to submission and obedience. In his company people felt as if an electric current was running through them and, in the twinkling of an eye, they emerged from the state of uncertainty and speculation to attain the goal of faith and assurance.[1] His presence among his followers was the greatest means to attaining God-realisation. But in the Divine scheme of things even a hallowed life like his was not to be eternal. The holy Prophet, too, had to depart from the world on the appointed day.

> Mohammad is but a Messenger and messengers (the like of whom) have passed away before him. (—iii : 144)

Through him Allah brought His faith to perfection and His favour to completion.

> This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you as religion AL-ISLAM. (—v : 3)

With the raising up of him the glorious Order of the Apostles was terminated.

> Mohammad is not the father of any man among you, but He is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets. (—xxxiii : 40)

With the passing away of the sacred Prophet the link that had been established between the earth and the celestial world for the new Revelation and Apostleship was broken. But it was

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1. For a proper appreciation of it we will have to study the authentic works on the life and Traditions of the holy Prophet. The incident of Fudalas *Umrat-ul-Qada* to which he had come with the intention of assassinating the Prophet during the circumambulation of the House of Ka'aba, the last words of Amr-bin-el-'Aas, and the strength of faith and religious fervour displayed by Akrama bin Jahl may be cited as cases in point.

necessary that the relationship between man and his Creator was maintained so that the process of the fulfilment of his destiny could go on uninterrupted. In order to fulfil this need and to enable the Ummat[1] to function as the deputy or representative of the Prophet after him, two things were granted to it, the Eternal Book, i. e., the Quran, whose freshness never fades nor wonders cease, and *Salat* which also, like the Quran, is full of vitality and unequalled in the Shariat for forging a link with God and gaining access to Him. By means of them Muslim ascetics and men of God have, at all times, succeeded so marvellously in their spiritual endeavours and attained such a high degree of inner excellence that the rationalists cannot even dream of it. Their number is legion. These two things are in the nature of an exlixir of life for the Ummat which impart not only active strength and energy but also serenity and true spirituality. Thanks to them the Ummat does not at all stand in need of a new Apostleship and it has been possible for it consistenly to maintain the same living contact with the Almighty and draw moral and spiritual sustenance from it as during the lifetime of the sacred Prophet. Because of them the Muslims have also been able to carry on earnestly the noble mission of the guidance of the world.

> And strive in the path of Allah with the endeavour which is His right. He hath chosen you and hath not laid upon you in religion any hardship. The faith of your father (Abraham) is yours. He hath named you Muslims (meaning those who have surrendered) of old time and in this (Scripture, the Quran), that the Messenger may be a witness against you, and that ye may be witnesses against mankind. So establish worship, pay the poor-due, and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protecting Friend. A blessed Patron, and a blessed Helper. (—xxii : 78)

In Form as well as in Content

Salat in the legacy of Apostleship which must be preserved

1. People belonging to the same belief. Here it means the Muslims.

conscientiously and handed down from generation to generation in form as well as in content. This, indeed has been going on ceaselessly in the Millat and the Muslim legists and theological scholars have left no stone unturned to work out to the minutest detail the rules and regulations of *Salat* and to classify it with different groups and categories. They have laid down all that was to be known about it by critically examining the rules and Traditions appertaining to it and drawing the distinction among the obligatory, near-obligatory, supererogatory and *Nafl* and *Sunnat* prayer-services and laying down precisely what was allowed and what was prohibited with regard to worship.

But just as we have been handing down meticulously the forms and regulations of *Salat* from one generation to another it is necessary for us also to see that its meaning, spirit and true atmosphere of reverence, sincerity and humbleness is also transmitted duly to the future generations since the *Salat* of the holy Prophet was comprehensive of both the outer form and the inner content. Once on being enquired about *Ihsan*[1], the Prophet is reported to have said, "(It means) that you worshipped God as if you were seeing Him, and if you were not seeing Him, He, at least, was seeing you."[2]

The *Salat* of the holy Prophet was the most sublime example of *Ihsan*. It is related by Mutarrif that once his father said, "I have seen the Prophet offering up *Salat*. From his bosom such sounds of sobbing were coming that it appeared that a grindstone was being worked somewhere."[3] The elevated Caliphs, the holy Companions, the *Tab'een*[4] and all the other deep-hearted men of God who came after them strove to maintain the same standard of sublimity in their *Salat* and celebrate it as the Prophet did. Repeated references are made to their fervent

1. Meaning, single-mindedness.
2. *Sahihain*
3. *Da'ud*
4. The term is applied to the Muslims who followed the immediate *Ashab* or Companions of the holy Prophet.

devotion to *Salat* and to the length, elegance and spiritual depth and intensity of their prayers in almost all the historical and biographical studies appertaining to Islam and Muslims. Hazrat Ayesha relates about her father, Hazrat Abu Bakr, that he was extremely tender-hearted and when he recited the Quran it became difficult for him to control his tears. When, during his last illness, the Prophet ordered Hazrat Abu Bakr to lead the service, Hazrat Ayesha is reported to have said, "He is very tender-hearted and bursts into tears when he recites the Quran."[1]

In the same way, Hasan Basri relates about Hazrat Omar that, sometimes, during his nightly devotions he began to cry when he came to the verses conveying the warnings of Divine Chastisement and was so excessively overwhelmed that he fell to the ground and was taken ill and people used to come and enquire about his health. Ibn-i-Omar, again, relates that once during the morning prayer-service Hazrat Omar wept so much that he could hear it though he was separated from him by three rows. Hazrat Alqama bin Waqas says, "Hazrat Omar was once reciting *Sura-i-Yusuf* in the prayers of *Isha* and I was in the last row. When he came to the part which deals with the parable of Hazrat Yusuf I could hear that he was crying."[2] It is, further, related by Abdullah bin Shaddad that once he heard him crying from the last row. At that time he was reciting the verse : *I reveal my distress and anguish only unto Allah.*[3]

Duty of Muslim Teachers and Reformers

It is the duty of the Millat, particularly of the Ulema and those who are engaged in the task of moral and religious correction and reform, to take care not to lose this priceless heritage. The wondrous light shed by it must be preserved in the encircling gloom of ungodliness and materialism and despite all the winds

1. *Bukhari*
2. *Bukhari*
3. *Ibid.*

of change and revolution that may blow because its loss cannot be made up by anything, no matter how many treatises on Islamic Shariat and Jurisprudence are written or sermons delivered. Movements for reform and regeneration can succeed among the Muslims only when the spark of faith is ignited again in the hearts of the Ulema as well as of the common people and some glimpses of the crusadings spirit, the enthusiasm for religious preaching and instruction and the warmth and earnestness of *Salat* are revived and recreated in the Millat which were the chief characteristics of the Muslims of the earlier times and the real springs of their strength. It has been aptly said by Malik bin Anas that "only that can set right the last part of the Ummat which had set right its first part."

> Successful indeed are the believers
> Who are humble in their prayers. (—xxiii : 1-2)

ZAKAT

(Poor-Due)

But if they repent and establish worship, and pay the poor-due, then they are your brethren in religion. (-ix : 11)

II

WE have seen how singular and unexampled the bond is between God and man. We may say that it is a bond between a Merciful and Benevolent, Rich and Magnanimous Master and a poor and destitute, weak and helpless slave, and the infinite Love and Kindness and Power and Sublimity of the Compassionate and Beneficent Lord and Protector demands that the slave should surrender himself implicitly to His Will and sacrifice willingly not only his material possessions but all that he has, including the heart and soul, for His sake.

Manifestations of Divine Benevolence and Care

We will now bestow a little thought upon the manifestations of Divine Care, Benevolence and Magnanimity. God created man of the *best stature* and endued him with the power and ability to exploit the treasures of the earth to his advantage and harness the forces of nature to his needs, and set up, for this purpose, a marvellous mechanism of thought, feeling and action within him. He favoured him with the gifts of understanding and curiosity and granted to him the capability to avail himself of His bounty in co-operation with his fellow-beings and on the basis of mutual give-and-take.

The Divine Attributes of Creation, Preservation and Guidance are evident in all living and non-living things. *Our Lord is He Who gave unto everything its nature, then guided it aright.*[1] But the largest share of them has fallen to the lot of man (who is the Vicegerent of God on earth).

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1. Al-Quran, xx : 50

> Verily We have honoured the children of Adam. We carry them on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have preferred them above many of those whom We created with a marked preferment. (—xvii : 70)

> For man God made the earth flat and the climate agreeable and endued him with the ambition to control and make use of all that was contained in the world. He it is Who hath made the earth subservient unto you, so walk in the paths thereof and eat of His providence. (—lxvii : 15)

God not only subjugated for man the basic requirements of life, like fire, water and food-crops, without which he could not live, but also made them cheap and common.

> Have ye seen that which ye cultivate ? Is it you who foster it, or are We the Fosterer ? If We willed, We verily could make it chaff, then—would you cease not to exclaim: Lo, we are laden with debt ! Nay, but we are deprived ! Have ye observed the water which ye drink ? Is it ye who shed it from the raincloud, or are We the Shedder ? If We willed We verily could make it bitter. Why, then, give ye not thanks ? Have ye observed the fire which ye strike out ? Was it ye who made the tree thereof to grow, are were We the Grower ? We, even We, appointed it a memorial and a comfort for the dwellers in the wilderness. (—lvi: 63-73)

Human Nature

As against the animals, vegetables and minerals, God endowed man with a sense of beauty and refinement and an urge for progress and change. It is to these distinguishing qualities of human mind and character that the world is indebted for its unfading charm and dynamism. All the discoveries and inventions, evolution and upliftment, growth and variety owe their origin to them. But for these essential attributes the world would not have been what it is today.

> Each do We supply, both these and those, from the bounty of thy Lord. And the bounty of thy Lord can never be walled up. See how We prefer one above another, and verily the Hereafter will be greater in degrees and greater in preferment. (—xvii : 20-21)

God also blessed man with the spirit of co-operation with his fellow-beings, with the desire to be solicitous of each-other's needs, to maintain peace in the land and to bend his energies and employ his enthusiasm for common good and for gaining a lawful sustenance. Mankind has never been bereft of these instincts and aspirations. They have always been operative in the world in various degrees.

> For the civilising of Quraish, for their civilising (We cause) the caravan to set forth in winter and summer. So let them worship the Lord of this House (the Ka'aba) Who hath fed them against hunger, and hath made them safe from fear. (—cvi : 1-4)

Man is not the Real Owner

From these self-evident truths (which lay bare the helplessness of man and reveal in full measure the Sovereignty and Overlordship of God) it follows, logically as well as morally, that nothing should be attributed to man or regarded to be his property in the true sense of the term. In other words, he ought to be treated as a child, as a suckling and a toddler, who is brought up in the lap of his parents or walks by holding their finger. He is even more helpless for the place of God is far more exalted than that of a parent.

> His is the Sublime Similitude in the heavens and in the earth. He is the Mighty, the Wise.
>
> (—xxx : 27)

Thus, all the things that are supposed to be the property of man and whose ownership he has assumed through ignorance should, in truth, be ascribed to God, and considered as belonging to Him, who is the true Creator and has given control over them to man for a limited time and in a limited way.

Underlying Idea

In view of this fundamental reality (which transcends all other realities and is at work in all the religious, moral and economic structures of the world), the Quran has committed all human affairs, in their entirety, to the charge and keeping of God, and held man responsible only for the office of Vicegerency. It, sometimes, addressess Muslims in the way:

> And bestow upon them, of the wealth of Allah which He hath bestowed upon you. (—xxiv : 33)

And, sometimes, it says:

> And spend of that whereof He hath made you trustees. (—lvii : 7)

The above verses proclaim to the world that all the things man considers his own belong, in truth, to God who is their real Owner. So, it does not become him to be boastful if he spends a few pice from his pocket in His way.

> And what aileth you that ye spent not in the way of Allah, when unto Allah belongeth the inheritance of the heavens and the earth? (—lvii : 10)

Such being the case, it would appear that man should relinquish his claim over his property and cease altogether to enjoy the right to make use of his wealth.

But God, in His Wisdom, has not preferred such an arrangement for man. He has not deprived him of the right to own property and to hold and enjoy the fruits of his labour by ascribing them exclusively to Himself. Had he done so even then there could be no cause for complaint or lamentation but man's keenness for work and desire for progress and his spirit of enquiry and competition would have suffered a grave impairment. He would have lost much of his enthusiasm for living, and the joy he experiences on seeing his dreams materialise and toils bearing fruit would have departed from his heart. It is the same kind of pleasure which children derive by attributing things belonging to their parents to themselves. On being deprived of this instinctive joy and sense of possession man would have stopped being what he was. The spirit of love and sincerity

and the urge to protect and develop his property would have gone out of him. From the world would have disappeared the fire and fervour of struggle and competition which is so essential to progress. It would have been reduced to a huge workshop with man functioning in its like a tool and an instrument.

Hence, wealth has been ascribed over and over again in the Quran to man and not to his Lord and Creator.

> And eat up not your property among yourselves in vanity, nor seek by it to gain the favour of the functionaries (of the government) that ye may knowingly devour a portion of the property of others wrongfully.
>
> (—ii : 188)
>
> Those who spend their wealth for the cause of Allah and afterward make not reproach and injury to follow that which they have spent; their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve. (—ii : 262)
>
> O ye who believe! Spend of the good things which ye have earned, and that which we bring forth from the earth for you. (—ii : 267)
>
> Give not unto the foolish your wealth, which Allah hath made the livelihood for you.
>
> (—iv : 5)
>
> And if ye believe and ward off evil, Allah will give you your wages, and will not ask of you your worldly wealth.
>
> (—xlvii : 36)

In numerous verses of the Quran wealth is not only attributed to man but whatever he spends from it in the way of Allah and for the welfare of His bondmen is also described as a *goodly loan.*

> Who is it that will lend unto Allah a goodly loan, so that He may give it increase manifold? (—ii : 245)
>
> If you lend unto Allah a goodly loan, He will give it increase manifold. (—lxiv : 17)
>
> And establish worship, and pay the poor due, and lend unto Allah a goodly loan. (—lxxiii : 20)

Vicegerency and Trusteeship

The truth that everything belongs to God and He is the Absolute Owner of all that exists had permeated the lives of the Muslims of the first century of the Islamic era so completely that they considered themselves merely to be the trustees of their wealth and did not make use of their material possessions as they wished. There was not a semblance of pettiness or vain-glory in their manner of spending.

The Quran had perfected their faith in the doctrine of Vicegerency and Trusteeship and convinced them about their worldly goods that though they had been earned by them with the sweat of their brow they had returned to God by virtue of the covenant of Islam. This is what a Muslim affirms when he recites the Confessional Formula and enters into the fold of Islam. He avows and declares, plainly and unequivocally, that he has surrendered his rights to Allah who is now entitled to take back what He has given. He has purchased their wealth from the believers and can claim it whenever He wants.

> Allah hath bought from the believers their lives and their wealth, and the Gardens (of Eternity) will be theirs in return. (—ix : iii)

The Quran warns those of a dreadful sequel who yield blindly to the love of wealth and to whom their desires and comforts are dearer than striving in the path of Allah and fulfilling other obligations to Him, and who imagine that they are free to hoard up wealth or spend it as they please.

> Say (O Prophet): If your fathers, and your sons, and your brethren, and your wives, and your tribe, and the wealth ye have acquired, and the merchandise for which ye fear that there will be no sale, and the dwellings ye desire are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His cause, then wait till Allah bringeth His Command to pass. Allah guideth not the wrongdoers.
>
> (—ix : 24)

The Quran informs the believers that it is nothing short of self-destruction to recoil or abstain from spending liberally in the

way of Allah and sacrificing their life and property in His cause and for the defense of the Islamic faith which is their whole existence.

> Spend your wealth in the cause of Allah, and be not cast by your own hands to ruin; and do good. Lo! Allah loveth the beneficent. (—ii : 195)

The attitude of the holy Companions towards property was governed wholly by the Quranic spirit. They had placed their worldly goods at the disposal of the sacred Prophet. Before the *Hijrat* (Migration to Medina), all the eminent Companions like Abu Bakr Siddiq, Uthman bin 'Affan, Abdul Rehman bin 'Auf, Suhaib Rumi and Abu Salma acted in accordance with the lofty standard laid down in the Quran, and, after it, the *Ansars*[1] of Medina, too, abided by it at all times.

The reply given by the Hazrat S'ad bin Ma'az to the holy Prophet on the eve of the battle of Badr was eminently typical of this way of thought. It is related that "when the reports of the advancing army of the Quraish reached the Prophet he conferred with his Companions. He sought the advice of the *Mohajirs*[2] and they gave a very good reply. He, again asked for their opinion and they again gave a very good reply. When the holy Prophet did it for the third time the *Ansars* thought that the inquiry was, in fact, addressed to them. Hazrat S'ad bin Ma'ad, then, stepped forward and said that perhaps the Prophet wanted to know what was in the mind of the *Ansars*. He was not mistaken because the *Ansars* had undertaken to support and protect the Prophet while he was in Medina but when he decided to march out of the city in order to engage the enemy in the open the position had altered. Hazrat S'ad bin Ma'ad proceeded, 'I declare, on behalf of the *Ansars*, that you may advance to wherever you like, sever or establish relations with whomsoever

1. The inhabitants of Medina who first embraced the Islamic faith and played hosts to the Muslims who had migrated from Mecca with the Prophet.
2. The Muslims who had migrated from Mecca to Medina with the Holy Prophet.

you please, take from our goods or leave of them whatever you wish—what you will take will make us happier than what you will leave—, we will carry out your commands with all our heart. We swear if you will want to advance even up to Bark Ghamadan[1] we will follow you, and, by God, if you will march into the sea we, too, will jump into it."[2]

Spending in the way of God

When the conviction that their worldly possessions belonged, in fact, to God and they were holding them only in trust was firmly embedded in the hearts of the Muslims they were enjoined to spend in the way of God what was left of their wealth after meeting their needs. The following verse was then revealed to the Prophet.

> And they ask thee (O Mohammad) what they ought to spend (in the way of God). Say: that which is left after meeting your needs.[3] (—ii: 219)

The early Muslims unreservedly complied with this injunction. After affirmation that Allah was the real Owner of all wealth and they were only its administrators, trustees or caretakers every sacrifice had become easy for them. They suppressed their own needs and gave away what they had to others. The incident of the hospitality of Abu Talha Ansari is still preserved in history. It is related by Abu Huraira that once a person came to the Prophet and said that he was starving. The Prophet enquired from his house but there was nothing in it which could be offered to him. The Prophet, then, said, "Is there anyone

1. In Yemen, about 500 miles from Medina.
2. *Zad-el-Ma'ad*, Vol. I, pp. 136-37.
3. Ibn-i-Kathir holds that the word *Al-'Afu* in this verse means 'what is in excess of the needs of your household'. Ibn-i-Umar, Mujahid, 'Ata, Akrama, Sa'eed bin Jubair, Mohammad bin Ka'ab, Al-Hasan, Qatada, Al-Qasim, Saalim, Ata Khurasani and Rabi bin Anas also agree with him. But Ibn-i-Battal says that it denotes 'what is left after *Kafaf*, (i. e., after meeting the bare necessities of life).' Here we have adopted this later interpretation.

who can have him as a guest for the night?" On hearing it, Hazrat Abu Talha stood up and said, "He will be my guest, O Prophet of God!" He took him to his house and said to his wife, "He is the guest of the sacred Prophet. Lay before him whatever you may have." The wife replied that she had nothing by way of food except the children's meal. Hazrat Abu Talha, thereupon, told her to put the children to sleep at some pretext after the *Isha* prayers and come and extinguish the light when the guest began to eat. They, on their part, would forego the dinner that night. When Abu Talha presented himself before the Prophet the next morning the sacred Prophet remarked, "The act of so-and-so was very much appreciated by the Lord." On that occasion the following verse was revealed:

> (Those who) prefer (the needy) above themselves though starvation may become their lot. (—lix: 9)

Zakat in the Sense of Charity and Alms-giving

Zakat is also mentioned in the verses revealed in Mecca denoting pure charity and alms-giving. The Quran states:

> Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers, and who shun vain conversation, and who are payers of the *Zakat*.
>
> (—xxxiii: 1-4)

> And woe unto the idolators who give not the *Zakat*, and who are disbelievers in the Hereafter.
>
> (—xli: 6-7)

On other occasions, too, the term of *Zakat* has been used in the same sense. For instance, while dwelling upon the teachings of the Prophet and the virtues of Islam in the court of the Negus of Ethiopia, five years after the mantle of Apostleship had fallen upon Prophet Mohammad (Peace and Blessings of the Lord be upon whom), it was observed by Hazrat Jafar bin Abi Talib that "He (the holy Prophet) has commanded us to worship God and to associate no one with Him and he has enjoined on us *Salat*, *Saum* and *Zakat*.[1]

1. *Ibn-i-Hisham*

Need of a Permanent and Uniform Arrangement

After the Islamic society had attained a high standard of conceptual integrity and moral discipline and the virtues of magnanimity and self-denial had begun to be cherished in it and it had also expanded enough to include people belonging to different moral and spiritual and social and economic grades, God, in His wisdom prescribed for it a precise and clear-cut *Nisab* i. e., arrangement for *Zakat*, which left nothing undefined as regards its quantity, assessment, and time and mode of payment. The *Nisab* (i. e., lowest taxable limit) is neither so high that people of average means may find it unbearable nor so low that it may lose its significance for the rich and the generous-hearted.

It was also advisable that the fixation of *Nisab* was not left to individual judgement or to the discretion of the Ulema or legislators for they were not free from the subjective influence of temperament and disposition. *Zakat*, therefore, was duly prescribed along with *Nisab*.[1]

Hazrat Shah Waliullah has the following to say on the wisdom of the fixation of the *Nisab* of *Zakat*:

"The need was felt for fixing the rate of *Zakat* for if it was not done there was the danger of the prevalence of irregularity and confusion in its observance, with everyone following his own rule.

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1. We, on our part, are inclined to prefer the view that Zakat was made an obligatory duty after Hijrat and within five years of it. This is supported by the Tradition related by Zamam bin Th'alaba and other members of the deputation of the tribe of Abd-el-Qais (which had waited on the Prophet in the 5th year of Hijrat), and the dialogue between Heraclius and Abu Sufiyan (which took place in the beginning of the 7th year), as also by the Tradition related by Qais bin Obadah which says that "the sacred Prophet bade us to pay *Sadqatul Fitr* before the command for Zakat was revealed. Thereafter, Zakat was made obligatory and the Prophet neither ordered us to stop the payment of *Sadqatul Fitr* nor to go on with it, but we continued to pay it." The veracity of this Tradition is accepted on all hands. *Sadqatul Fitr* is related to Ramadan, the month of fasting which was made obligatory in the 2nd year of Hijrat. The Quranic verse bears testimony to it and, by all accounts, it was revealed in Medina.

It should neither be so negligible that its effect is not felt and it fails to serve as a corrective to miserliness nor so high as to be unbearable. The same is the case with the time of its payment and the period covered by it. It should neither be so short as to necessitate the payment of *Zakat* every now and then nor so long as to give a holiday to misers and, at the same time, provide no relief to the indigent. It was expedient to lay down a law for it in the same way in which the rulers fix the limit and extent of the taxes they levy on their subjects, seeing that everyone, Arab as well as non-Arab, was accustomed to it and paid the imposts as a matter of course. A Muslim who is in the habit of carrying out the commands of God cheerfully and not as a painful compulsion will, particularly, be ahead of everyone in complying with it also."[1]

Assessable Goods

The sacred Prophet has determined the rate of *Zakat* and also the time of its payment and the goods on which it is to be paid. He has divided the worldly possessions on which it is assessable into four categories: (i) agricultural produce including fruit-crops; (ii) herds of cattle; (iii) savings and silver and gold; and (iv) merchandise and other goods of trade and industry.

"*Zakat* is payable once in a calendar year but for agricultural and fruit crops the harvesting time will mark the end of the year. No other arrangement could be more just and equitable for if *Zakat* was to be paid week by week or month by month it would have entailed a very heavy burden on the rich, and if only once in a lifetime it would have been unfair to the needy. The yearly payment is, thus, most reasonable. The fixation of the quantity of *Zakat* has been made with due regard to the diligence, industry and convenience of the *Nisab* holders. Hence, on the wealth which falls into one's hands suddenly and all at once such as, mine or a treasure-trove, it is not permissible to

1. ***Hujjatullah-ul-Baligha***, Vol. II, p. 3

wait for the passage of a year but its *Khums* (one-fifth) will be paid then and there. On wealth, like agricultural produce, which is earned by sustained labour the *Ushr* (or one-tenth of the produce) is paid provided that cultivation is dependent wholly on natural rainfall and no wells are dug or other irrigational devices employed, but if, recourse is taken to artificial means of irrigation only one-twentieth is paid. Again, on incomes derived from professions which require greater attention and industry than agriculture or fruit growing one-fortieth of the profit is handed over as *Zakat*. The same principle has also been followed in the determination of the lowest taxable limit or *Nisab*. For savings the *Nisab* has been fixed at 200 *dirhums*, for gold at 20 *mithqal*,[1] for agriculture produce at 5 *wasq*[2] (which is equal to five camel-loads), and for herds of cattle at 40 goats, 30 cows and 5 camels."[3]

Dwelling, further, on the subject of *Zakat* Hazrat Shah Waliullah remarks:[4]

"The doors the pious rulers had opened for *Zakat*, without any trouble or inconvenience, and are also acceptable to reason, are four. First, that the *Zakat* should be levied on *Amwal-i-Namia* (i. e., goods that are capable of growth and development) because these goods require the greatest amount of protection and their development, also, is not possible without export. Such goods are of three kinds: herds of cattle, agricultural produce and articles of trade.

"Second, that it should be realised from the capitalists and owners of mines because their need for security against theft and robbery is greater and the sources of their income are so vast and

1. At the time of the holy Prophet mithqal was equal to 1 dinar and 1 dinar to 10 dirhams. Thus, 20 mithqals (or dinars) were equal to 200 dirhams which, according to some Indian Ulema, are equal to 52 1/2 tolas of silver or 7 1/2 tolas gold. (One tola being equal to about ten grams).
2. One wasq is equal to 62 sa'a and one sa'a to 8 ratl, and one ratl to about 34 tolas.
3. Adapted from *Zad-ul-Ma'ad*
4. *Hujjatullah-al-Baligha*, Vol. II, p. 30

numerous that the addition of a new item of expenditure not hurt them much.

"Third. that it should be levied on wealth which falls into one's hands without any toil or exertion like a treasuretrove found hidden in the earth. Such a wealth is in the nature of a windfall and people can spend freely from it.

"Fourth, that it should be realised from the ordinary traders and businessmen. If a little is taken from each of them it will add up to much and they will also not feel the pinch.

"Trade (including export and import), agriculture and fruit-growing are the main sources of *Zakat* which keep on expanding. The period of assessment for them is one year because different crops are grown and various conditions prevail during it and a correct calculation of the yield can be made only at the end of the year.

"It is better and easier that *Zakat* should be paid in the form of goods on which it is levied, such as, a camel from a drove of camels, a cow from a herd of cows and a goat from a flock of goats."

Expenditure

The principles regulating the expenditure of *Zakat* have been prescribed by the Quran in the following terms:

> Verily the *Sadaqat* (obligatory alms) are only for the poor, and the needy, and those who work for these (State revenues) and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and to free the necks (i. e., slaves and prisoners of war), and the heavily indebted, and in the path of God, and for the wayfarer—a duty imposed by God ; God is Knower, Wise.
>
> (—ix : 60)

These verses were revealed in Medina when the foundations of Islam had been firmly laid and people were embracing it in large numbers. A collective system of *Zakat* was then established[1] and the Prophet sent his tax-collectors to various parts of

1. The principles underlying the determination of the items of expenditure

(*Continued on the next page*)

the State with the necessary instructions embodying the principles of common good, kindliness, prudence and individual convenience[1]. The advice he gave to Ma'az bin Jabal while despatching him to Yemen in 10 A. H.[2] may be said to form the legal basis of *Zakat*. He said:

"You are going to a people who are *Ahl-i-Kitab* (i. e., who profess a religion revealed and contained in the Holy Scriptures). So invite them to the truth that no one is worthy of worship save Allah and I am His Apostle. If they accept it, tell them God has enjoined a *Sadqa* upon them which will be taken from the well-to-do in their community and distributed to the poor among them. If they agree to it also desist from laying your hands on the best of their possessions[3] and fear the cry of the oppressed for there is no veil between him and the Lord."[4]

Fundamental Objectives

A number of contemporary writers who are unduly impressed by the modern economic theories lay stress only on the social and economic aspects of *Zakat* and regard it as nothing more

as prescribed in these verses of the Quran are of permanent validity and hold good at the present time also except the one concerning those "whose hearts are to be reconciled". A majority of jurists hold that after the spread and ascendancy of Islam it has no longer remained necessary to include these persons among the beneficiaries of the *Sadaqat* paid by Muslims and, in their support, they quote the practice of Hazrat Abu Bakr who did not pay out of Zakat to them. But there are some who still believe in its permanence. To us the opinion expressed by Qazi Abu Bakr bin-el-Arabi seems most acceptable. He says, "I think it is not necessary to adhere to it where Islam is in power, but where the need is felt it should be observed as was done by the Prophet. The Prophet once said: 'Islam made its beginning in helplessness and will soon return to it." (*Ahkamul Quran*, p. 385).

1. These instructions are reproduced in detail in the books on the Life and Traditions of the holy Prophet.
2. *Saheeh Bukhari* and *Kitab-el-Maghazi*
3. Meaning that it is not proper for you to take the best of their cattle as Zakat.
4. *Sehah-i-Sitta*

than a just and equitable of form taxation. Or, to take a more charitable view, it appears from their writings that among the various systems of taxation which have so far been practised in the world they find this Islamic tax to be most fair and reasonable. Consequently, they conclude that *Zakat* can provide the soundest and most stable support for the socialism Islam had presented to the world when it was at the height of its glory. They, however, are guilty of over-looking the underlying spirit of the institution of *Zakat* which is characterised by the sentiments of God-awareness, worship and devotion. They fail to appreciate that its fundamental purpose and merit lies in cleansing the heart of conceit, selfishness and cruelty, in enabling the believer to seek the good pleasure of the Lord and in bringing about sanctity, effulgence and prosperity in his wealth through sympathy and solicitude for the poor and the downtrodden.

The Quran has specifically pointed out this basic significance of *Zakat* and laid the main emphasis on it.

> Take alms of their wealth, wherewith you mayst purify them. (—ix : 103)

Drawing the distinction between *Zakat* and usury the Quran says :

> That which ye give in usury in order that it may increase on (other) people's property hath no increase with Allah ; but that which ye give in charity, seeking Allah's countenance, hath increase manifold. (—xxx : 39)

It is related by Hazrat Ibn-i-Abbas that the Prophet once said, "Allah has not enjoined *Zakat* upon you but for the reason that the rest of your wealth is cleansed through it."

After it there is the consideration of collective good which includes the establishment of a self-supporting society, the fulfilment of the basic needs of the poor and the affording of opportunity to everyone to lead a respectable life so that he can pay a due regard to the rights of God as well as of fellow-men and attain the goal of self-realisation.

Muslim scholars who had made a deep study of the holy Quran, the *Sunnah* and other Islamic theological sciences and

also kept themselves safe from extraneous influences, or, in other words, who had learnt exclusively at the school of Apostleship and chosen the right path for acquiring an understanding of Islam were strictly regardful of priorities in respect of ends and purposes and attached the same importance to them as was demanded by the *Shariat*. This aspect of *Zakat* was appreciated most of all by the holy Companions and it was conscientiously passed on by them to the succeeding generations as a part of the legacy of Prophethood. We will now reproduce the opinions expressed by some of the most eminent theological scholars and legists in order to enable the readers to obtain a clearer idea of the underlying meaning of *Zakat*.

Writes Hazrat Shah Walliullah:[1]

"Know that there are two main objects of *Zakat*. One is the disciplining of the self because there is a relation between subliminal human consciousness and avarice. Avarice is worst of moral attributes which can lead to unbounded infelicity in the Hereafter. A greedy man's heart will remain attached to worldly possessions even during the last moments of his life and, because of it. he will be punished severely in the future existence. But if he is accustomed to paying *Zakat* his infatuation for wealth will be softened and it will be a source of advantage to him in the end.

"In the Hereafter the most superior moral virtue, after the love and fear of God, is generosity. Just as devoutness, prayer, supplication and repentance are instrumental in forging an identity with the Celestial World, generosity goes a long way to demolish the narrow, mean and debased patterns of worldly existence for it is the very antithesis of vulgarity and beastliness. The real aim is that the celestial attributes acquire the upper hand and the animal attributes are subdued or, rather, get evolved to the same class of human qualities to which the celestial attributes belong. The way to it is that, notwithstanding one's own needs,

1. *Hujjat*, Vol. II, pp. 29-30

wealth should be spent in the way of God, the oppressor is forgiven and trials and hardships are endured with patient perseverance born out of faith in Futurity. The holy Prophet has enjoined all these things upon us and prescribed their proper limits. Included among them is the spending of wealth to which a number of conditions are attached and which commands so much of importance that it has been mentioned, repeatedly, in the Quran side by side with faith and worship.

> They will say : We were not of those who prayed nor did we feed the hungry We used to wade (in vain pursuits) like (all) waders.
>
> (—lxxiv : 43-45)

"The other purpose is related to the life of the town where the weak and the indigent also live and if their needs are not taken care of they will die of starvation. Moreover, the administration of the town is dependent on revenue and those who are entrusted with their defence and government cannot engage in a private profession due to the official duties. They, too, have to depend for their livelihood on state-revenue. Joint expenditure and donations are neither possible nor easy for everyone. Because of these considerations, it is a legitimate and established practice to realise a fixed amount of money from the people in the form of taxes. And since it was advisable that both the ends should be closely linked to each other the *Shariat* has done the same."

Allama Bahrul Uloom[1] of Firangi Mahl, writing in the same vein, remarks that *Zakat* is not a tax but an act of worship and, like any other act of worship, it is solely for God. He says :[2]

"Soundness of intention is most necessary at the time of the payment of *Zakat* for it is a major form of worship, and, as the case is with *Salat*, it should also be prompted by no other consideration than that of Divine propitiation. Thus, *Niyat*,

1. As Maulana Abdul Ali Mohammad s/o Mulla Nizamuddin was popularly known.
2. *Rasael-el-Arkan*, p. 163

(i. e., intention) is an essential prerequisite of it. and just as *Salat* cannot be offered without *Niyat*, *Zakat* also, cannot be paid without it. But, while a prayer-service celebrated without *Niyat* is an exercise in futility *Zakat* paid without it becomes a gift and the giver is entitled to the same reward as is on a gift because Allah does not permit a good deed of anyone to be wasted."

Chief Characteristics

There are many factors which distinguish *Zakat* from worldly taxes and other imposts. These special features have imparted to it a unique character of religious sanctity and endued it with the power to make its influence felt in every sphere of life and morality. This cannot be said of any other form of taxation however fair and legitimate it may be.

The most outstanding characteristic of *Zakat* is the spirit of *Iman* and *Ihtisab* which makes it a unique institution of its kind. None of the traditional taxes or economic systems can lay a claim to it. On the other hand. an element of reluctance and rancour is present in all of them. This is so because the assessee is not moved by the conviction that the levy is from God who is going to recompense him for it. What is more, he knows that those who have imposed the taxes are mere mortals like himself, and, perhaps, of a lower moral and intellectual calibre, and a large part of the revenue thus collected is going to be spent on vain luxury and ostentation and for the benefit of a few privileged sections of the society only.

Hence, for reasons known only to God, *Zakat* has invariably been mentioned in the Quran and the Traditions either with its virtues and benefits in this world and the next, like increase in wealth and Divine reward and recompense, or with the warning of a dreadful chastisement to those who fail to pay it when due. Says the Quran :

> The likeness of those who spend their wealth in Allah's way is as the likeness of a gain which groweth seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains. Allah giveth increase manifold to whom He will. Allah is All-Embracing All-Knowing.

Those who spend their wealth for the cause of Allah and afterward make not reproach or injury to follow that which they have spent; their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve. (—ii; 261-62)

Those who spend their wealth (in Allah's way) by night and day, (and) by stealth and openly, verily their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.

(—ii: 274)

Lo! Those who believe and do good works and establish prayer and pay the poor-due, their reward is with their Lord and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve. (—ii: 277)

Who is he that will lend unto Allah a goodly loan, that He may double it for Him and his may be a rich reward? (—lvii: 11)

Lo; Those who give alms; both men and women, and lend unto Allah a goodly loan, it will be doubled for them, and theirs be a rich reward. (—lvii: 18)

That which ye given in charity, seeking Allah's countenance, hath increase manifold.

(—xxx: 39)

Side by side with these joyful tidings, the Quran also administers a severe warning to the hoarders of wealth who violate the rights of God and encroach upon the rights of the poor and accumulate gold and silver for the love of it.

They who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah, unto them give tidings (O Mohammad) of a painful doom. On the day when it will be heated in the fire of Hell, and their foreheads and their flanks and their backs will be branded therewith) and it will be said unto them): Here is that which ye hoarded for yourselves. Now taste what ye used to hoard.

(—ix: 34-35)

The holy Prophet, too, has given joyful tidings to those who

pay the *Zakat* regularly and declared it to be a source of success and felicity in both the worlds.

It is related by Hazrat Abu Huraira that the Prophet once said, "When anyone spends in charity from his clean (i. e., legitimately procured) goods, (and God likes only the goods that are clean), Allah takes it in His right hand, and if it is a date it grows in His hand till it becomes as big as a mountain in the same way as you rear the young one of a cow or a goat."[1]

It is, again, related by him that the Prophet once said, "A man was travelling in open country when he heard a voice from Above telling the cloud to go and irrigate the orchard of such-and-such a person. The cloud, then, moved and emptied itself over a particular plot of land. There was a tank or hollow land in it which was filled with water. The traveller walked up to it and saw a man irrigating his field with the water. He said to him, 'O bondman of Allah! Tell me your name.' The man gave out the same name which the traveller had heard from the heavens and enquired from him the reason for wanting to know his name. The traveller, thereupon, narrated to him how he had heard the voice tell the cloud to go and irrigate his orchard. The man observed, "Now that you have asked, listen: I give away one-third of the produce in charity, spend one-third of it on the maintenance of my family and invest one-third in the orchard."[2]

Another Tradition of the Prophet reads, "The wealth of no one suffers a decrease due to *Sadqa*; by forgiving a person is made more honourable by Allah; and, when anyone practises humility for the sake of Allah He raises him in stature."[3].

Hazrat Ayesha relates that once some persons slaughtered a goat and the Prophet enquired from her if anything was left of it. She replied that nothing was left except a fore-quarter. The Prophet remarked, "Every thing is left except the fore-quarter."[4]

1. *Sehah-i-Sitta* (with the exception of *Abu Da'ud*)
2. *Muslim*
3. *Muslim*, *Turmizi*, *Muatta*
4. *Jame Turmizi*

On the other hand, the sacred Prophet has admonished them in the strongest terms who do not pay *Zakat* and warned them of a deplorable end in this world and a dreadful sequel in the Hereafter. It is related that once he said, "He on whom God bestowed wealth and he did not pay the *Zakat*, his wealth will be brought, on the Day of Judgement, in the shape of a snake which will have two tongues, and it will be thrown round his neck. It will seize him between its jaws and say, 'I am your wealth! I am your wealth! I am your treasure!' The Prophet, then, recited the following verse of the Quran: *And let not those who hoard up that which Allah hath bestowed upon them of His bounty think that it is better for them...........*"[1]

In another Tradition of the Prophet it is stated, "When spoils of war become plunder and trusts become spoils of war, when *Zakat* is considered a penalty and knowledge is acquired for showing contempt to religion, when husband obeys wife and disobeys his mother and friend is held close and father is pushed away, when shouting is done in mosques and noise is made in them, when headship of the tribe goes to the most depraved of it and the meanest in the community become its chief, when a person is respected only for protection from his mischief and singers and musicians became popular in society, when wine flows freely and people belonging to the last phase of the *Ummat* denounce those who belonged to the first phase, then wait for the red sand-storm, the tremor, the sinking (of earth), the shower of calamities and the appearance of the signs of God in uninterrupted sequence, as if a string (of beads) had broken and the beads were falling one after the other."[2]

As a consequence of these exhortations the Muslims had become the guardians of their own inner selves. They not only voluntarily collected revenue for *Bait-el-Mal*[3] but also served as supporters and representatives of the poor. They looked for the

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1. *Tirmidhi*
2. *Ibid.*
3. Meaning Public Treasury.

deserving parties and genuine causes, carefully and diligently, realising that the sooner the duty to God was discharged the better it would be for them. It was only after they had got done with it that they felt at peace. If we studied the lives of the holy Companions and *Tabe'en* we would know what their attitude was in these matters and how profoundly had they been influenced by the teachings of Islam and the Traditions of good advice and admonition. *Zakat*, for them, was like *Salat* to offer which at the correct time is the foremost concern of a Muslim and he feels a constant load on his chest until he has done so.

The doctors of Islamic Jurisprudence were conscious of the advantages intrinsic to *Zakat* and of the role it played in character-building and promotion of religious-awareness. They, as such, made a liberal use of exhortations and inducements in their sermons and discourses and it did have the desired effect on the society otherwise the institution of *Zakat* would probably have languished and just as the Muslim governments have discarded the duty of its collection and distribution the *Ummat*, too, on the whole, would have forsaken it. To quote from Hazrat Shah Waliullah once again :[1]

"One of the objects of the Traditions containing inducements to *Infaq* (i. e., spending in the way of God) and bringing out its material and spiritual virtues is that it should be carried out with highmindedness and generosity which is the essence of *Zakat* and the aim of moral disciplining can also be served through it in good measure. Miserliness has been condemned in them over and over again because greed can undermine the very purpose of *Zakat* as is borne out by the Tradition which says, 'Avoid greediness for it is greediness that led to the undoing of those who came before you.' Another Tradition reads, 'Verily, charity cools down the fire of Allah's wrath.' Then, again, there are these two Traditions : 'Beyond doubt, charity puts out sins in the same way as water puts out the fire', and 'God takes

1. *Hujjat*, Vol. II, pp. 31-32

Sadqa in His right hand and goes on enlarging it. . . . . ."

Zakat should be Collected from the Well-to-do and Distributed to the Poor

The fundamental difference between *Zakat* and the traditional taxes is of intent and design. In the inimitable words of the sacred Prophet, "It (*Zakat*) should be collected from the well-to-do and distributed to the poor among them." This is the legal position of *Zakat* which was evident during the first and second centuries of Islam and must be maintained till the end of time. *Zakat* ought to be collected from the moneyed people who fulfil the conditions which make it an obligatory duty and posses the taxable minimum of wealth (as laid down by the *Shariat*) and spent on items prescribed for it in the Quran. No worldly power or authority can amend or alter the legalistic structure of *Zakat* on its own. The Quran declares: *The alms are only for the poor and the needy. . . .*[1]

From the *Shariat* and the Traditions of the Prophet it appears that the above verse applies to the poor and the needy of the place. This arrangement of *Zakat* was maintained even by governments which did not function wholly in accordance with the Islamic Law. Under such governments, too, the rights of the poor and the deserving were not entirely ignored nor the injunctions of God completely suspended or done away with.[2]

The taxes levied by the modern governments are just the reverse of *Zakat*. These taxes, whether fair or unfair or light or heavy, are, generally, realised from the lower and middle classes of the community and spent for the benefit of the upper and privileged ones. The wealth thus obtained mostly from workers, peasants, small traders and artisans is expended heartlessly on maintaining the rulers in princely luxury. It is,

1. IX: 60
2. An authentic proof of it is available in Imam Abu Yusuf's book entitled, *Al-Kheraj*, which was written at the suggestion of Caliph Haroon-el-Rashid.

further, squandered by the governments on their embassies in foreign lands whose main job is to throw cocktail parties in which wine flows like water and on foreign journalists, news agencies and other mass media of communication which trade unashamedly in malice and falsehood but have come to be regarded as more useful than armaments. These have become the most legitimate items of expenditure of the national revenues. The modern governments, communist or capitalist, mercilessly suck the blood of their people mainly to pour it out into the ocean of propaganda, political bribery and journalistic fraud. We can describe the current taxes most aptly by reversing the maxim laid down by the sacred Prophet with regard to *Zakat* so that it may read that *these are collected from the poor and distributed to the well to-do. Zakat*, which has been enjoined upon men of substance, is, on the other hand, an act of compassion and benevolence and a part of the Divine legacy of Apostleship. If it must be called a tax it is the least irksome and most beneficial of taxes which is realised from the rich and distributed to the poor.

Spirit of Piety and Humility

Another grand characteristic of *Zakat* is the spirit of piety and humility. By it we mean the noble religious sentiment and moral ideals that are its life-breath and have been dwelt upon repeatedly in the Quran. Those who pay the *Zakat* and spend their wealth on the poor and the destitute are urged to cultivate these virtues and desist from destroying the moral and spiritual merit of their deed by following it up with painful reminders of the favour bestowed.

> Those who spend their wealth for the cause of Allah and afterward make not reproach or injury to follow that which they have spent; their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve. A kind word with forgiveness is better than alms-giving followed by injury. Allah is Absolute, Clement.
>
> O ye, who believe! Render not vain your alms-giving

by reproach or injury, like him who spendeth his wealth only to be seen of men and believeth not in Allah and the Last Day. His likeness is as the likeness of a rock whereon is dust of earth; a rainstorm smiteth it, leaving it smooth and bare. They have no control of aught of that which they have gained. Allah guideth not the disbelieving folk. (—ii : 262-64)

Men of charity and monetary good-doing who are imbued with the spirit of modesty and sincerity and pay the *Zakat* with the same intent are spoken of in these laudatory terms in the Quran.

And those who give that which they give with hearts afraid because they are about to return unto their Lord, these race for good things, and they shall win them in the race. (—xxiii : 60-61)

Your friend can be only Allah; and his messenger and those who believe, who establish worship and pay the poor-due, and bow down.[1] (—v : 55)

And feed with food the needy, the orphan and the prisoner, for the love of God, (saying): We feed you for the love of Allah only. We wish for no reward, nor thanks from you. Lo! we fear from our Lord a day of frowning and of fate. (—lxxvi : 8-10)

The Quran, moreover, requires that the goods spent in the way of God and given to the poor and the needy should be pure and of a good quality. It should not be that what is worthless or not needed is given away to others in charity.

O ye who believe! Spend of the good things which ye have earned, and of that which We bring forth from the earth for you, and seek not the bad (with intent) to spend thereof (in charity) when ye would not take it for yourselves save with disdain; and know that Allah is Absolute, Owner of Praise. (—ii : 267)

1. Allama Abu Hayyan Andulusi writes in *Al-Bahr-el-Muheet* that the word *Ruku* in the above verse denotes humbleness and reverence and not the posture of bowing low.

It is related that once while Hazrat Ayesha wanted to give a piece of stale meat in charity the Prophet reproached her. "You are trying to give in charity what you cannot eat yourself," he said.[1]

On the contrary, the present-day taxes are totally devoid of moral and spiritual content. They are paid without any regard to sincerity and humility.

These taxes, as a rule, are considered to be a burden and recourse is taken to all sorts of legal devices to evade them. If, in the end, they have to be paid it is done with utmost reluctance. This is true of all contemporary legal and economic structures mainly for the reason that they are not morally or religiously oriented and no spirit of sanctity is associated with them.

Zakat and Usury

Zakat is just the reverse of usury. In origin and design and nature and purpose the two are inimical to one another and the fruits they bear and the effects they produce, both for the individual and the society, are also widely different.

While the fear of God, the doing of one's duty to Him, the seeking of His good pleasure, the concern for His needy and destitute bondsmen and kindliness, compassion and self-denial form the essence of *Zakat*, the entire system of usury is reared upon defiance of God, callousness, excessive greed and heartless exploitation of the needs of others. Consequently, *Zakat* leads to the promotion of faith and the development of the spirit of brotherhood and fellow-feeling. Visible signs of economic well-being become manifest in society, goods are visited with prosperity and love is generated in the hearts because of it. The practice of lending money on interest, conversely, breeds egotism, covetousness, parsimony and mistrust. It fosters the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. The money-lender is like a small tank into which all the wealth of the community ultimately flows or the mountain of magnet one reads about in

1 *Masnad-i-Ahmad*

the story of Sindbad the Sailor. It is said that when Sindbad's boat had lost its way, after being caught in a storm, the oarsmen began to cry that there was a mountain of magnet nearby which would draw out the nails of the boat and it would sink. In the same way, the usurers and money-lenders possess a magnet (i. e., accumulated asset in cash and gold) which attracts the nails that hold together the boat of the society and its boards are cut loose from each other and the society falls a prey to a hundred moral and economic ills.

Usury sustains and promotes conditions that give rise to class hatred. The poor and the under-privileged masses are always at a loss. The society gets divided into two distinct groups of haves and have-nots. The Quran has, therefore, condemned usury in the strongest terms. It has used much greater force to denouce it than to extol charity. The Quran employs the same method in dealing with usury as it does in case of lewdness and other mortal sins. For instance, take this verse:

> O ye who believe! Observe your duty to Allah and give up what remaineth (due to you) from usury, if you are (in truth) believers. And if ye do not, then be warned of war from Allah and His Messenger. And if ye repent then ye have your principal (without interest). Wrong not, and ye shall not be wronged. (—ii : 278-79)

The revolting picture of the usurer drawn by the Quran is enough to fill the heart of a Muslim with repugnance.

> Those who swallow usury cannot rise up save as he ariseth whom the Devil has prostrated by (his) touch. That is because they say: Trade is just like usury; whereas Allah permitteth trade and forbiddeth usury, He unto whom an admonition from his Lord cometh and (he) refraineth (in obedience thereto), he shall keep (the profits of) that which is past, and his affair henceforth is with Allah. As for him who returneth (to usury)—such are rightful owners of the Fire. They will abide therein.
> (—ii : 275)

The Quran has drawn the comparison between usury and alms-giving at a number of places and summed up the effects and consequences of both in verses which it will take volumes to explain.

> Allah hath blighted usury and made alms-giving fruitful. Allah loveth not the impious and guilty. (—ii: 276)
>
> That which ye give in usury in order that it may increase on (other) people's property hath no increase with Allah; but that which ye give in charity, seeking Allah's countenance, hath increase manifold. (—xxx: 39)

The holy Prophet has praised charity and spoken of the blessedness and increase which attends the material possessions of Muslims through its moral and spiritual goodness. Besides, he has given the warning of immediate punishment and wretchedness in this world, too, to those who do not practise it. It is related that once the Prophet said, "When a community stops paying the *Zakat*, Allah punishes it with drought and famine."[1] In the same way, the Prophet has warned those of severe chastisement in both the worlds who lend money on interest. He has said, "When usury becomes prevalent among a people, Allah afflicts it with fear."[2] Another of his Traditions reads: "The curse of Allah rests on him who offers loan on usurous terms, and on him who receives, and on the writer who writes the deed thereof, and on him who does not spend in charity."[3]

It is related by Hazrat Abu Huraira that the Prophet once said, "The night on which I was taken on the celestial journey I passed by a people whose bellies were like houses in which there were snakes that could be seen from outside. I enquired about them from Gabriel and he said that they were the usurers."[4] The Prophet, again is reported to have said, "Whom Allah seeks to destroy, He first spreads usury among them."[5]

1. *Tabrani*
2. *Nissai*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Musnad-i-Ahmad*
5. *Kanzul Ummal*

Anyone who examines the history of Islamic society, particularly its moral aspect, i. e. from the point of view of the enforcement of the Divine commands, the sanctioning of what is allowed in Islam and the prevalence of blessedness and peace and prosperity which flowed from the enforcement of the *Shariat*, and compares it with the spectacle of backwardness, poverty and distress the Muslim world presents today owing to the disregard of Islamic values and violation of duties prescribed by the Divine Law will be convinced of the truth of the Traditions we have just seen. Says the Quran:

> Whoever doeth right, whether male or female, and is a believer, him verily We shall quicken with good life, and We shall pay them a recompense in proportion to the best of what they used to do. (—xvi: 97)
>
> But he who turneth away from the remembrance of Me, his will be a narrow life, and I shall bring him blind to the assembly on the Day of Resurrection. (—xx: 124)

Reforming Role of Islam

Like the other fundamental duties of faith, such as, *Salat*, *Saum* and *Haj*, in *Zakat*, too, Islam has played a reforming role of redoubtable significance. The reforms it has introduced satisfy all the individual and collective requirements of charity and are also free from pollution through distortion or misinterpretation which has been the bane of the earlier faiths.

Concept of Zakat in Ancient Religions

When a person with a scholastic bent of mind and acquainted also with the legalistic structure of Islam looks for a clear, precise and comprehensive law of charity in the ancient religions he is sorely disappointed. He finds that the law of charity in these faiths merely consists of a few vague and incoherent principles which can better be described as moral and religious exhortations. These precepts possess little of legal authority or authenticity and are more in the nature of suggestions in which a definite command and a clear-cut directive is scarcely to be seen. After a pains-

taking enquiry what one succeeds in laying one's hands on are a few starting points of discussion and a hazy outline of the concept of charity.

If, for instance, one wants to know on whom was *Zakat* enjoined in those faiths and on what goods, what was the obligatory minimum for it and to whom it was to be paid and what were the legitimate items of its expenditure no adequate answers will be obtainable. One the contrary, all these points are fully explained in the *Shariat* and no aspect of *Zakat* has been left untouched by the Muslim legists.

In all the ancient religious systems one is confronted with the same intriguing situation and, consequently, it has become extremely difficult for a scholar to embark on a comparative study of Islam and other faiths in respect of their teachings on worship, monetary dealings and jurisprudence. Anyhow, we will proceed to examine the place of charity and the rules and regulations governing it in three of the most ancient religions of the world, Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity, on the basis of material available in the standard works of their own scholars or impartial Western Orientalists.

Charity in Hinduism

We will begin with a summary of the paper contributed by Prof. A. S. Geden to the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*[1] in which the concept of charity in the Hindu faith has been discussed with commendable insight and accuracy. It is, by and large, an authoritative and scholarly attempt. The learned author has adhered to the elucidation of the basic idea and stipulations of alms-giving and abstained from offering criticism or entering into a contrastive discussion. He says:

"Alms-giving (*dana*) among the Hindus is primarily a religious obligation, and differs in some important respects, both in conception and in practice, from that which passes under the same name in the West. Of alms-giving, as the bestowal of gifts

1. Vol. III, pp. 387-89

upon the poor and needy prompted by a feeling of sympathetic compassion, Hinduism knows nothing. But the habit of generosity, of sharing possessions with others and relieving their wants, is perhaps more widespread in India than in any other country. It is clear, moreover, that only where such an obligation is universally recognised and acted upon can companies of wandering ascetics, as in India, move hither and thither, without restraint throughout the land, confident everywhere of finding support and having their wants freely supplied. Manu also declares that liberality is the special virtue and duty of man in this Kali age.[1] The only rightful recipients of alms, however, are the Brahmins and the various orders of ascetics. These have a claim to support and gifts (*Dakshina*) from all classes of the community; and from such donations merit accrues to the giver, the amount of which is in direct proportion to the value of the gift.

" In India, therefore, alms-giving is inspired by a religious motive, the desire to secure personal advantages and reward in the future life.[2] The theories and teachings of the Hindu books leave no room for the play of disinterested generosity; although many Hindus are in this respect better than their creed and it is only among certain communities of monks who devote a part at least of their time to charity and the relief of the poor that anything approaching the Western conception of alms-giving is found. There can be little doubt that here we should recognise the kindly and human influence of Buddhism. At festivals and also on occasions of pilgrimage the abbot of the monastry will entertain all comers regardless of recompense. The underlying motive of the act, however, in these instances is still Indian, not Western or Christian. Generosity, indeed, is enjoined upon monks as a part of their vow. Those who can give nothing else must give their books. Ordinarily, however, monks and ascetics

1. Meaning *Kali-yuga*
2. It should be noted that the doctrine of the transmigration of soul is universally accepted among the Hindus.

do not bestow but receive. And the need and opportunity for alms-giving in the wider sense, within the laity and among non-Brahminical part of the population, have always been met to a considerable extent in India by the usages and institutions of caste and the joint family life which throw upon the whole circle the burden and obligation of the support of each individual.

"As early as the Vedic hymns, gifts (*Dana, Datra, Dakshina*) take a prominent place in the thought and teaching of the poets; and the virtue and the merit of the giver are repeatedly emphasised. In the Vedic literature, generally, and in the later Smrtis, specially in the Dharma Shastras and Puranas, one of the chief duties incumbent upon a householder is charitable giving (*Datrata, Datriva*) and careful, if not always consistent, definitions are given as to the persons (*Dana Patra*) upon whom such alms may be bestowed. Manu lays down distinct and ordered rules on the subject, which except as interfered with or modified by European influence, governed Hindu practice up to the present day. Such gifts are said to be *Dharmatham*, 'for the purpose of (acquiring) religious merit', a chapter of the *Skanda Purana* bears the title. *Tanadharma-Vidhi*, 'rules for alms-giving'; and Hemadr devotes the second part of his great work to the same theme.

"Thus all Hindu ascetics live by alms; in contrast with the laborious and self-denying lives of many similar communities in the West, they may not and do not, in any case, earn their living by work, but are dependent upon the charity of others. The institution and habitual practice of begging on a wide scale, together with the rules regulating it, are of great antiquity in India. And the burden of supporting an army of wandering mendicants, whose lives are unproductive, must always have pressed hard upon the poorer classes of the population. It was from Brahminism that Budhism inherited the duty of liberality towards those whose lives were devoted to the service of the religion, developing and systematizing an ancient principle and placing it on broader foundations. Sakyamuni himself in a former birth had become the title of *Danasura*, 'a hero in liberality.' Such practices, therefore, were no novelty in Buddhist

ethical and social duties. Jainism, also the second great Protestant community of the early centuries, while rejecting the extravagant claims of the Brahmins, maintained the claim of the devotee and the ascetic to support at public expense. In neither case was a new principle introduced, but a long-standing custom was sanctioned and continued for the benefit of the ascetic orders and the teachers of religion. Such gifts were, broadly speaking, of two kinds. Grants of landed estate and dwelling houses etc., and taxes derived from villages and tithes hold the first place. More irregular and occasional were the donations of food or money which at all festivals, anniversaries, household ceremonies etc., the Brahmins received as their perquisites. To the latter class belonged the contributions in kind which the wandering mendicant exacts from the fears and superstitions of the ignorant villager.

The *Mahadana* (great gifts) were ten or sixteen in number. Of these gold was the most important, then estates, buildings, village taxes etc. Of gifts in gold the most costly, and therefore, the most meritorious was the *tuladana* or *tulapurusa*. The donor caused himself to be weighed in the scales against an equivalent of gold which was then distributed in largess to the assembled Brahmins. A king of Kannauj in the 12th century is said to have repeated this costly donation a hundred times; another example is that of a minister of Mithila in the early part of the 11th century. Hiuen Tsiang gives a marvellous account of the benefactions of Siladitya,[1] sovereign of Kannauj, who was accustomed, once in five years, to give away in alms all that he possessed. A similar act of lavish charity was occasionally performed with silver substituted for the more valuable metal. In certain initiatory rites connected with the assumption of the sacred thread a figure of a cow or sacred lotus made of gold plays a prominent part; and this, after the ceremony, is broken up and the fragments distributed to the Brahmins or gifted to the temple. Similarly, after a banquet the royal or

1. That is, Harshvardhan.

wealthy host will at times bestow upon his guest the costly dishes of gold and silver that have been employed in the feast. Grants of land or revenue to monastic institutions or to Brahmins have always been frequent in India. Such grants are recorded as early as the inscriptions of Ashoka; and, according to the legend, the same Emperor in his later life had to be restrained almost by force from ruining himself and his house by his extravagant generosity. Similar gifts and dedications are far from being uncommon at the present day. To provide free meals for Brahmins is also an act of great merit, the virtue of which increases with the number of Brahmins fed. On a lesser scale this is done at every household ceremony, anniversary or feast; and at the great festivals large provision is made, and numerous companies of pilgrims and ascetics gather together and are entertained often for several days. The example of Usavadata is quoted, who in a cave inscription attributed to the first century of our era, boasts that he provided annually for the wants of 1,00,000 Brahmins with gifts of 1,00,000 cows, 16 villages, pleasure grounds, tanks etc. In ancient times such records are numerous of Kings who maintained a number of Brahmins at their own cost for a prolonged period, or even for life. And like the monastic orders of the Middle Ages in Europe the Indian orders of monks became rich in the possession of estate ('property belonging to the god'); in some instances a considerable proportion even of the land and revenue of a State passing into their hands.

"In the North of India, what might thus be termed as systematic alms-giving or donation more or less in the nature of a regular contribution or tithe for the support of communities or individual teachers, *gurus* holding official position as recognised heads of a sect or school of thought are now less usual than in the South. The *gurus* themselves exercise a less wide and powerful influence. In the South regular fees are exacted and every means short of legal or actual compulsion is adopted to ensure payment. These *gurus* go on circuit through the principal cities of their dioceses, their visits are made the occasion for

demanding the recognised fees and gifts. The formal grants also to religious institutions more usually than in the North take the form of revenue assigned for the support of the resident monks or priests and, as far as the motive and aim of the donor are concerned such grants are hardly distinguishable from the more indiscriminate and irregular largess practised at the festivals or in the country districts.

"In the case of private gifts the rule was laid down that no one was so to impoverish himself by his liberality as to leave wife or children destitute. Other regulations prescribed a limit of a 100 cows, defined the fees which might be required, or forbade the acceptance by one of a gift which had been returned by another, or to part with a gift on the day on which it had been bestowed. The recipients, moreover, were carefully graduated according to their worth; and upon some it was altogether a sin to confer presents. In theory also it is obligatory upon every twice-born man, after he had lived the life of a house-holder, or *grhastha*, and begotten a son to carry on his line to part with all his goods and possessions to Brahmins, and to go forth homeless and resourceless adopting the life of an anchorite in the forest, *Vanaprastha*, and later that of a wandering mendicant, *Sanayasin*, begging his food from door-to-door. Such mendicants ordinarily possess nothing but an alms-bolw made up of a coconut, or, sometime, of brass with a waterpot, and, in some instances, a staff and rosary. Instances have not been unknown even in recent times of men of education and influence and wealth, who have elected to abandon all, and devote the closing years of their life to poverty and religious contemplation, dependent for support upon the charity of their fellow countrymen.

"Alms-giving is also practised by Hindus in the form of gifts and endowments for hospitals and animals. These foundations are often of considerable antiquity. At Benares and elsewhere, sick, maimed and diseased cows are provided with shelter and food by the munificence of pious donors and the daily offerings of the faithful. The total volume of such charitable gifts in India must be very considerable."

From Geden's narrative it is apparent that in the extensive design of alms-giving which has been in operation in the largest part of India and during the longest period of its history the Brahmins have occupied the pivotal place and the whole arrangement has virtually been revolving round them. After the Brahmins are the yogis and ascetics, and thus, though it may be quite unintentional, there has come into being in the Hindu society a class of men who are dependent solely for their maintenance on the religious charity and generosity of their co-religionists. It should not be difficult to imagine its social and moral consequences. The moral weaknesses it gives rise to and the habits of indolence and parasitism it breeds would not do credit to any community. It also seems that in a religious set up of this kind (even if it may be taken to be a characteristic of the era of decadence) the giving and receiving of alms was held not only to be virtuous but also, to a certain extent, essential for self-purification. Consequently, begging, that is, going from door to door collecting alms and living wholly on them has come to be regarded in some of the religions of India as an act of worship and a spiritual exercise of a high order. It has become a part of the daily life of some of their holy orders. The order of *Bhikshus* or monks in Buddhism offers a noteworthy example. In Burma, for instance, such ascetics draw particularly the attention of a visitor.[1] The ever-increasing ranks of *Bhikshus*, the total withdrawal of a section of the population from the active pursuit of life and the resultant moral degeneration have created a host of problems for that country.

Besides, in this system of charity and in the teachings and practices of these religions one encounters little evidence of the organisation and regularity which is common to almost all Semitic faiths. From worship to rituals and ceremonies such a freedom of choice has been permitted to their adherants and allowance made

1. The present writer, during his visit to Burma in 1960, saw a large number of *Bhikshus* in Rangoon, Mandalay and other principal towns. He observed the daily routine of their life from close quarters and witnessed unforgettable spectacles of beggary.

for local exigencies that people living in different parts of India are found to differ widely from one another in religious design and programme of life, so much so that their beliefs and practices can hardly be said to belong to the same religion.

Judaism

Allama Sulaiman Nadwi, writing under the caption, '*Zakat* in Earlier Religions', in the Vth volume of his monumental work, *Seerat-un-Nabi*, says :

"*Zakat* is among the forms of worship that are common to all Divine faiths but it had been so much neglected by their followers that even its name does not apparently occur in the catalogue of obligatory duties prescribed by them though the Quran asserts, and other revealed Scriptures also confirm, that just as *Salat* was an essential feature of all religions, *Zakat*, too, has always been one of their main pillars. The covenant the Israelites had made with God included both of these obligations.

> We made a covenant with the Children of Israel (saying) : establish worship and pay the poor-due. (—ii : 83) ?

> We made a covenant with the Children of Israel (saying) : Lo ! We are with you, if ye establish worship and pay the poor-due. (—v : 12) ?

In respect of Prophet Ismail (Ishmael) it is stated in the Quran :

> And make mention in the Scripture of Ishmael. Lo ! he was a keeper of his promise, and he was a Messenger (of Allah), a Prophet. He enjoined upon his people worship and alms-giving, and was acceptable in the sight of his Lord. (—xix : 54-55)

And about Jesus it is mentioned that he declared :

> Allah hath enjoined upon me prayer and alms-giving so long as I remain alive." (—xix : 31)

We learn from the Old Testament that the Israelites had to pay the tenth part of the crop of their land and herds of cattle in charity (Lev. 27 : 30-32). Those among them who were twenty

years old or above were required to make an offering of half-a-shekal (*Mithqal*) to the Lord (Ex. 30: 13-15). Similarly, at the time of reaping the harvest it was enjoined upon them not to reap the corners of their fields or gather the gleanings of their harvest but to leave them for the poor and the stranger (Lev. 23: 22; 19: 10). In practice it was due every three years and the revenue thus collected was deposited at Jerusalem. One-eighth of it was given to the priests, one-tenth to the Levites and every third year the tenth part was reserved for spending on the pilgrims to Jerusalem. Out of it food was also distributed to the strangers, the poor, the orphans and the widows. The cash atonement money of half-a-shekal was set aside for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation and for buying the vessels of the altar (Ex. 30-16: 16; 38-31).

As against the Indian religions, in Judaism, which has been based, more or less, on Apostolic guidance and thrived under the benign shadow of Prophecy for a longer period than the faiths associated with the Aryan race, a greater identity is found with the teachings of Islam on charity and alms-giving. The Jewish Scriptures do not extol begging or depending for one's livelihood on charity but seek to inculcate the qualities of dignity and self-reliance among the poor. It is stated by Bensira that it is better for a poor man to spend his days in his own log cabin than to live confortably in anyone else's house. In the same way, to wander from door to door is declared to be an abomination. Whatever has been said in the Mosaic law about the virtues of charity bears a close resemblance to the Islamic precepts. Consideration has also been shown in it to human feelings and sentiments. According to Aboth (1-5) the obligation of charity is one of the pillars of society. It is, further, laid down that the poor, too, should give alms.

In the Mosaic legislation the givers of charity are enjoined to give a tithe of their income but in no case should they donate more than a fifth part of it lest the giver himself may be forced by the circumstances to be the recipient (Kethuboth 50-A). The administration has been empowered to intervene in the collection

of charity when the situation calls for it. It is set forth in Kethuboth 19-B that the misers who refuse to give charity, or to give it adequately, should be compelled to do so, and, if necessary, the defaulter should be beaten till he obeyed the commandment. Likewise, the kinsmen of the donor have precedence over others in receiving the goods given away by him. It reminds us of the Prophet's Tradition which says : "Let your spending (in God's way) begin with those who are in your maintenance."[1] In Babamezia it is laid down that the parents come first, then brothers and sisters, then the poor of one's town, and, lastly, those living elsewhere.

Alms can be given to Jews and non-Jews alike (Giltin 61-A). The ransoming of captives is better than the other acts of charity (Baḥa bathra 88). The poor should never be put to shame by receiving charity. Due regard must be paid to their sentiments (Shebbath 63-A). The giving of charity with a bad grace robs the act of its virtue (Bababathra 98).[2]

The *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* goes on to say[3] : "A highly organised system of poor-relief existed in the Talmudic period. Its main features were a daily distribution of food and a weekly dole of money. The funds for both distributions were compulsorily collected by two or three men of unquestionable probity and their administration entrusted to three others who carefully investigated the merits of the applicants (Baba bathra 8-A; Shabbath, 118-b; Abodabzara 17-B). They were expressly enjoined to perform their duties with all possible consideration for the feelings of the poor (Kethuboth 676). Both distributions continued to a much later age (Maim loc cit, 9 :3).

"The scriptural ordinance was also scrupulously obeyed by the devout Jew in the Middle Ages. Begging was rare in Medieval Jewry, but the practice had greatly increased by the 17th century and speedily grew into an intolerable evil. The

1. *Bukhari*
2. As it is set forth in the Quran : *O ye who believe ! Render not vain your alms-giving by reproach and injury.* (II : 264)
3. Vol., III, p. 389

schonorrer, or professional beggar, became a familiar and disagreeable figure in every Jewish community. His importunities and impudence have been immortalised in Zangwill's *King of the Schonorrers.* Modern charity organisation among the Jews of civilised countries has now, however, almost completely deprived him of his occupation."

Notwithstanding the relative similarity with the teachings of Islam, a few instances of which we have cited above, a major difference between the structures of charity in the two religions is that among the Jews there exists a priestly class, distinguished by birth or association, for collection and administration of tithes whose office is hereditary. As G. F. Moore has observed: "The basis of this system (of collection of religious charity), as defined in the fundamental law, were the annual tithes of agricultural produce to be paid to the levites, who in turn tithed to the priests."[1]

In course of time, this arrangement led to the creation of vested interests in charity who, as is their wont everywhere, openly indulged in avarice and heartless exploitation. To quote again from Moore: "In the evil days before the (Jewish) rebellion of the year 66, avaricious high priests sent bands of braves who seized the tithes on the threshing floors and beat the priests who tried to keep what they had a right to."[2]

The measure of sincerity displayed by the Jewish community in the discharge of the religious obligation of charity can be realised from the following extracts taken from the book referred to above:

"This law contains no provision for the collection of the tithe, everything being apparently left to the conscience of the taxpayer, which all experience proves to be a slender reliance. Even in the very narrow limits of Judaea under Persian rule the voluntary method evidently did not work, and the compact in Neh. 10, 33-ff provides for the collection of the tithes in the

1. Moore, G. P.: Judaism, Vol. II, p. 70
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71

agricultural communities by levites accompanied by a priest (Neh. 7, 38-f); even this plan was not successful, for in Neh. 13, 10, we read that the tithes were not paid, and the levites deserted the temple to get a living by tilling their own fields..........

"It is small wonder that the peasant earned the reputation of being very 'untrustworthy' in acquitting himself of his religious obligation in this sphere. Even the most scrupulous of the class doubtless followed in this as in other matters the prescriptive usage of their fathers, heedless of the stricter interpretation of these laws in the schools and of the refinements of the oral law..........

"This negligence gave great concern to the religious leaders, but evidently their efforts to secure conformity to their standard had small success. Nor was the laxity of the common man in such matters his private affair which he might have to settle for himself with God. Such robbery of God was a national crime which was visited on the whole people: the favour of God and His blessing could be recovered only by complete amendment (Mal. 3, 8-12).

"The neglect of tithing was one of the causes of the exile.

"The religious leaders no doubt endeavoured, through instruction and exhortation, to impress upon the people the magnitude of their offending in thus defrauding God in the person of His ministry, but they certainly did not succeed in bringing about a great reformation."[1]

Bearing in mind the evidence furnished by Jewish scholars and the fact that the Jews have generally been famous for affluence and they have freely engaged themselves in trade, usury and other means of making money and are also noted for business acumen and shrewdness let us consider the Quranic verses in which a pointed reference is made to their racial characteristics of artfulness, greed and stinginess and to their reluctance in fulfilling the monetary duties to God even to the extent of being insolent.

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1. Moore, G. P.: Judaism, pp. 70-73

> Verily Allah heard the saying of those who said: "Allah, forsooth, is poor, and we are rich!"[1] We shall record their saying with their slaying of the Prophets wrongfully and We shall say: Taste ye the punishment of burning. (—iii: 181)
>
> The Jews say; Allah's hand is fettered. Their hands are fettered and they are accursed for saying so. Nay, but both His hands are spread out wide in bounty. He bestoweth as He will. (—v: 64)

The Quran tells that though the Jews of Arabia controlled a large part of the country's wealth and most of the trade was in their hands they habitually evaded the payment of *Zakat* and shrank back from spending of their worldly possessions in other spheres of charity.

> And (remember) when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel, (saying): Worship none save Allah (only), and be good to parents and to kindred and to orphans and the needy, and speak kindly to mankind; and establish worship and pay the poor-due. Then, after that, ye slid back, save a few of you, being averse. (—ii: 83)

Christianity

Jesus had not brought for his followers an elaborate law corresponding to that of Moses. His mission was confined to enacting a few amendments in the existing *Shariat* and fostering a true spirit of sincerity, submission, kindliness and fellowship among the Israelites. Jesus strove to impart a touch of reality to outward forms and ceremonials as compared to the exaggerated ritualism of the Jews. Like the other branches of faith and departments of life, he did not prescribe a permanent law or system for charity also as one finds in the Torah and the

1. A saying of the Jews of Medina. It is stated in the Commentaries that when the verse, *Who is he that will lend unto Allah a goodly loan?* was revealed the Jews said to the Prophet that it appeared that his Lord had become poor and was asking for charity.

commandments of Moses.[1] What he attempted was only to revive the element of truth, earnestness, philanthropy and God-fearingness in the framework of Mosaic teachings. No precise law or design of charity is, thus, found in the Christian religious literature or canonical decrees. What is contained in them does not go beyond moral instruction and advice.

For an idea of the conception of charity in the New Testament and the personal views of Jesus concerning it, as also of the extent to which the duty was fulfilled later during the period of the ascendency of the Church, and in the Christian world, as a whole, we will refer to the following :[2]

"Christ in his Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in his teachings enforces, at least as earnestly as the Jewish Rabbis, the duty of alms-giving. It is assumed that his followers are to do alms-giving, only their alms-giving must be done out of pure charity (Christians seeking to be perfect even as their father which is in heaven is perfect), and not from any desire for display, or praise, or self-aggrandisement (Mt. 6 : 1 ff). In the parallel sermon recorded in Luke the injunctions are even more numerous and express : 'Give, and it shall be given unto you,' 'Give to everyone that asketh thee, and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again,' 'Love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High : for He is kind to the unthankful and evil' (Lk. 6 : 30-38). That which He enjoined He prompted also by His example, spending much of the time of His public ministry in alleviating the ills from which men suffer, going about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, because God was with Him. (Ac. 10 : 38).

"Yet we must not think of Christ as a weak philanthropist.

1. It is said about Jesus in the Quran that he announced to the Children of Israel that "*I come confirming that which was before me of the Torah, and to make lawful some of that which was forbidden unto you. I come unto you with a sign from your Lord, so keep your duty to Allah and obey me.*" (—iii : 50).

2. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol., III, pp. 381-83

Just as He tells men in their own case that they are to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and that all other things shall be added unto them, so in helping others. He would have his followers show more regard to the care of the souls of their fellow men than to the relief of their bodies, as He Himself in effecting cures or giving aid, seeks not the immediate relief, but the ultimate improvement of those whom He assists. There is another point which it is necessary to bear in mind, viz., duty of mutual help among Christians is the relation in which men stand to God and to Himself, this at once constitutes them brethren; and inasmuch as all are ideally members of a society which is pervaded by a common spirit, all are bound in virtue of the membership to help one another. 'Bear ye', says St. Paul, in the spirit of the Master, 'one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ' (Gal. 6 : 2). But it is obvious that, in so far as benevolence and alms-giving are prompted by such a motive and inspired by such an ideal, boasting or display of any kind would be out of the question.

"Let us turn next to consider how the teaching of Christ and his example took effect in the conduct and teaching of his earliest disciples. The immediate outpouring of the Spirit which took place on the day of Pentecost was the establishment of a voluntary, self-imposed system of communism, the richer members of the community contributing all, or almost all, their goods to relieve the necessities of their poor neighbours (Ac. 2 : 44-4). Not everyone, it would seem, sold his goods, those who had not more than enough for their own necessities supported themselves, but those who had a superfluity of possessions sold or used them for the common good (4 : 34-38). Charity on such a heroic scale as that did not, and should not, last ; the instance of Ananias and Sapphira shows that the spirit which should have prompted it was sometimes counterfeited; and, perhaps, the evils which are sure to result from supporting people in idleness quickly showed themselves in the Church at Jerusalem, as we know from St. Paul's warnings that they began to do in other churches as well (2 Th. 3 . 10-ff). But while lhe

charity of the early days was not continued on the same scale when the first enthusiasm had passed away, an active, practical and unstinted alms-giving continued for long to be a very marked feature of the Christian churches, and ultimately of the Christian Church. The brethren, when they extended to St. Paul the right hand of fellowship............added the proviso that the poor should be remembered, a proviso which St. Paul himself was anxious to observe (Gal. 2 : 10). Accordingly, in order to carry this out, and thereby to knit more closely the divided Churches of Jews and Gentiles, we find him organising most carefully, both in the Churches of Macedonia and in those of Achaia, a collection and contribution of alms of which he was to be himself, though accompanied by representatives of the different churches, the bearer to the brethren who were at Jerusalem (2 Co. 8-9). The direction which he gives (1 Co. 16 : 2) for a weekly collection of alms, in this case seems to have been the origin of a custom which was largely followed in the different churches, and has continued to be in force to our own day.

"Nor was the need of alms-giving and of showing pity to the poor less insisted on by the rest of the Apostolic Church than it was by St. Paul. Not only does St. James denounce in strong terms the oppression of the poor by the rich (Ja 5 : 1-6, 2 : 6), but he sums up the whole of religious service in these words: 'Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this : To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unspotted in the world' (1 : 27) The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (13 : 16) concludes his practical advice to those whom he addresses with these words: To do good and to distribute forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

"Lastly, St. John put the duty in the clearest light, connecting most closely the service of man with its originating motive in the love of God. 'Whoso hath the world's goods', he says, 'and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him ?'

"We see, then, how in the teaching of Our Lord Himself and of his immediate followers alms-giving, or the relief of the poor, was recognised as one of the primary duties of the Christian life, one which grows immediately out of the relations in which men stand through Christ to God, and which is the immediate result and outcome of the recognition of the relation".

Islamic Reforms

Islam enacted a number of changes in the conception and plan of *Zakat* and alms-giving which had a far-reaching effcct on the moral life of the society. Here we will deal with a few of them.

Abolition of Vested Interests in Charity

Firstly, Islam abolished the vested interests, both religious and lineal, that had got entrenched in the institution of charity. The monopolistic system had worked to the detriment of the privileged classes themselves by perverting their moral outlook and making them indolent. They depended solely on the charity and generosity of others. It was no longer necessary for them to engage in a legitimate profession to earn their living. What held the guarantee of sustenance for such people was that they were the descendants of a Prophet, or belonged to a particular family, or held a religious office, though they might not be discharging any of the ensuing responsibilities.

In the outcome, a professional class had arisen which inspite of being devoid of a semblance of moral virtue was exploiting religion for its own and exercising a monopolistic hold over it.

At the same time, the poor, the weak and the downtrodden were put to a severe handicap because the donors felt that what they gave in charity should reach someone who held a high religious office or was the descendant of a Prophet or belonged to some other hallowed family. This practice was more pronounced in India where the Brahmin priests and *Purohits*[1] had

1. One who presides over the peformance of religious ceremonies.

assumed an exclusive control over the institution of charity with the needy and indigent having no share in it if they did not possess Brahmin blood in their veins.

In contrast to it, the sacred Prophet, once for all, put an end to the injustice by doing away with every kind of monopolism in charity. He even went to the extent of prohibiting the acceptance of *Zakat* to the entire clan of Bani Hashim, to which he himself belonged, by proclaiming in an unequivocal manner that "*Sadqa* is not allowed to us."[1] On his own part, he strictly abstained from accepting charity in any form. It is related by Abu Huraira that "when any one brought to the Prophet something to eat he used to enquire whether it was by way of a gift or *Sadqa* and partook of it only when he was assured that it was a gift and if it turned out to be *Sadqa* he declined to eat it and offered it to the Companions."[2] He also forbade his kinsmen from accepting charity so that they did not become accustomed to it and the Muslims did not choose his family for making such offerings to the exclusion of others. It is related by Abu Huraira that once Hasan bin Ali (one of the Prophet's grandsons) put a date of *Sadqa* in his mouth. The Prophet admonised him and told him to spit it out. "Do you not know," he said, "that we do not eat charity ?"[3]

This injunction held good during the lifetime of the Prophet as well as after his death. It is related that the Prophet once remarked, "*Sadqa* is the grime of the people and it is not permitted to Mohammad and his descendants to accept it."[4] The Islamic *Corpus Juris* (*Fiqh*) has consistently upheld this principle and it has been acted upon all the way in Muslim society. The doors of *Zakat* and alms-giving have always remained open for the general body of Muslims, to the poor, the needy and the destitute, and their rights have never been ignored.

1. *Ashab-i-Sunan*
2. *Sahihain*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Muslim*

The attitude of the sacred Prophet towards his kinsmen was the same in all such matters. They were kept at the head of others when it came to giving or incurring a loss, but where economic benefit was concerned they received the smallest portion of it. Thus, when usury was prohibited the Prophet applied it, first of all, to his own kinsmen, and when the vengeance of blood, which was practised in the days of Paganism, was forbidden and all blood-feuds were abolished he began with forgiving the murder of a member of his own family. In his last *Haj* sermon the holy Prophet declared :

> "Remember, every vestige of Paganism is under my feet. This day the retaliation for all murders committed in the days of Ignorance is cancelled, and, foremost of all, the murder of Rabi' bin Haris is forgiven who had been sent to the tribe of Banu Sa'ad for being nursed[1] and was killed.
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> "This day all sums of interest are remitted and the beginning will be made with the loans of Abbas bin Muttalib."[2]

Similarly, when *Zakat* was prescribed the holy Prophet prohibited the acceptance of it to his tribe of Banu Hashim and to his family and descendants for ever. This has been the practice with all the Divine Apostles and Messengers of God and the grand attribute of Prophecy and Apostleship, and, in it, the place of pride is held by Prophet Mohammad (peace and Blessings of Allah be upon whom).

No Intervening Channels in Zakat

The Prophet did away with all middlemen between the givers and recipients of *Zakat* as were found in Judaism, such as, the hereditary priests of Jerusalem, through whose agency alone could the duty of charity be discharged. The system of intervening channels of transaction had perverted the minds of those

1. In those days it was the custom for the well-to-do families of Mecca to send their infant children to be nursed and weaned in tne fresh air of the country.
2. *Muslim*

who were connected with the administration of charity and they had established their monopoly over it. As the Quran has said :

> O ye who believe ! Lo ! Many of the (Jewish) rabbis and the (Christian) monks devour the wealth of mankind wantonly and debar (men) from the way of Allah. They who hoard up gold and silver and spend them not in the way of Allah, unto them give tidings (O Mohammed) of a painful doom. (—ix : 34)

The middlemen in *Zakat* and alms-giving were dispensed with by Allah in the same way in which He had done away with the intervening links or intermediaries in *Salat* and other modes of worship. A Muslim can offer *Salat*, pay *Zakat*, keep the Fast and perform the *Haj* all by himself. All that he has to do is to acquire the necessary knowledge of the rules and conditions without which these religious obligations cannot be fulfilled in a proper manner. But once this is accomplished and his motive has also been set right he can freely carry them out without the assistance of an intermediary or the sanction of a priest.

Augmentation of the Rights of Recipients

Another meritorious contribution of Islam is that before its advent charity was hedged in by various restrictions, as for example, the recipients were not allowed to spend of it as they liked and a part of it was reserved for the pilgrims to the holy city of Jerusalem which was used up mostly in providing them with food and lodging. It goes to the credit of the Islamic *Shariat* that it made the less fortunate brethren who were deserving of *Zakat* the masters of the goods they thus received and conferred upon them the right to make use of them according to their needs and wishes. The latter *Laam* in the Quranic verse, *Lil Fuqara wal Masakin wal Aamilin 'Aliaiha*, signifies that *Zakat* belonged to those to whom it was given and they were free to spend it in whatever way they liked.

These improvements have made charity in Islam a most progressive, noble and comprehensive social and devotional institution.

Importance

In the Quran *Zakat* is mentioned side by side with *Salat* on as many as 82 occasions. The command: *Be steadfast in prayer ; practise regular charity* actually runs through it. Apart from it, where the distinguishing qualities of Muslims are set forth in it it is invariably pointed out that *They establish prayer and practise regular charity*. The holy Prophet has included it among the fundamental duties of Islam. He has remarked that the foundation of the Islamic creed rests on five pillars, the affirmation of the truth that there is no God save one God, the establishment of *Salat*, the payment of *Zakat*, the performance of *Haj* and the keeping of fasts in the month of *Ramadhan*.

Once it was enquired from the holy Prophet what Islam was. He replied, "Worship Allah and associate no one with Him, establish obligatory prayer, practise regular charity and observe the fasts of *Ramadhan*."[1] It is related by D'man bin Tha'lba that once he asked the Prophet, "Tell me upon the word of God that He has commanded you to collect *Zakat* from those of us that are well-to-do and distribute it to the poor," "Of course," the Prophet replied.[2]

There are countless Traditions of the Prophet supporting this view. In the *Ummat* it has been accepted and acted upon as a matter of course that *Salat* and *Zakat* are inseparable and cannot be detached from each other.

The Quran states :

> But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due, then leave their way free. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (—ix : 5)
>
> But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due, then are they your brethren in religion. (—ix : 11)

It is related by Abdullah bin Omar that the Prophet once said to him, "I have been commanded to wage war against the

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1. *Sheikhain*
2. *Ibid.*

people until they testify that there is no one worthy of worship save Allah and Mohammad is His Apostle, and establish *Salat*, and pay the *Zakat*. If they do so, they obtain the security of life and property from me except for the rights of Islam, and their account is with God."[1]

It is, further, related by Hazrat Abu Huraira that the sacred Prophet once said. "I have been commanded to wage war against the people till they affirm that there is no God except Allah, and bear faith in me and accept what I have brought. If they act accordingly they gain the security of life and property from me excepting the rights of Islam and for these they are accountable to God."[2]

Need of Organisation

Just as the innate character of *Salat* and its place in the *Shariat* demand that it should be offered congregationally, *Zakat*, too, by its very nature and legalistic significance requires that it should be deposited in *Bait-ul-Mal* (Public Treasury) and placed under the charge of the Caliphs and Amirs (i.e., ruler or leaders) responsible for its management.[3]

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1. *Bukhari and Muslim*
2. *Bukhari and Muslim*
3. Muslims are bound by the *Shariat* to set up the Caliphate or Imamate (Office of the Amir) and negligence in this regard can be sinful. A correct understanding of the books on Traditions and Islamic Jurisprudence and appreciation of the true spirit of Islam would warrant no other conclusion. The perusal of Shah Waliullah's *Izalatul-Khifa* and Maulana Ismail Shaheed's *Mansab-i-Imamat* will also be useful in this regard. The Muslims of former times did not admit of even a brief period of time to pass without a Caliphate or an Imamate. Thus, when the Muslim chroniclers began a new year in a situation like that they used to write that a year had elapsed and the Muslims were still without a Caliph. It is easy to imagine what would they have felt had they been alive today and seen us living for such a long time not only without the Caliphate but also without giving a thought to it.

Viewpoint of Abu Bakr

Such was the position of *Zakat* at the time of the holy Prophet's death. After him, his deputy and successor, Hazrat Abu Bakr was blessed with the deepest insight into the ideals, principles and objectives of Islam. It was his considered view that refusal to deposit *Zakat* in the Public Treasury was punishable with death.

Hazrat Abu Huraira has narrated in detail the events that led Hazrat Abu Bakr to arrive at this decision. He has also pointed out how a difference of opinion arose between Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Omar over it but was later resolved with the latter changing his view and acknowledging the better religious understanding of Hazrat Abu Bakr. It is stated by him that "when the sacred Prophet died and Hazrat Abu Bakr became the Caliph people began to turn to apostasy in large numbers. Hazrat Omar, thereupon, enquired from him on what ground would he sentence them to death when it had been declared positively by the Prophet that he had been commanded to be at war with the people till they affirmed that there was no God save one God, but if they made the affirmation they would obtain security of their life and property from him except for the rights of Islam and for these rights they were accountable to Allah ? Hazrat Abu Bakr replied, 'I will certainly wage war against those who make a distinction between *Salat* and *Zakat* for *Zakat* is the rightful claim of the goods. I swear that if they refuse to give even a kid which they used to give during the days of the Prophet I will make war on them.' Hazrat Omar says that 'Hazrat Abu Bakr was so clear in his mind about the correctness of his stand that I became convinced that he was in the right."[1]

Allama Khattabi, also, has discussed at length the various kinds of backsliders, dissenters and rebels, and the nature of their refusal to pay the *Zakat*. From the account he has furnished of the episode we can know about the circumstances that

1. Reported in all the books of the Traditions except *Ibn-i-Maja*

prevailed at the time and led to the expression of divergent views by the companions. He writes:

"The Apostates were of two kinds. One who had rejected the faith, turned towards Paganism and abandoned the Millet. These were the people about whom Hazrat Abu Huraira has spoken. They again, were divided into two sects. The first sect supported the cause of the pretenders like Mussailima, the liar, and Aswad 'Anasi, It followed them, and all the people belonging to it had renounced the Apostleship of Prophet Mohammad. It was against them that Hazrat Abu Bakr took up arms, Mussailima was killed at Yamana while 'Anasi had already been executed at Sana'a.[1] A majority of their followers were slain and the rest were dispersed. The nature of the Apostasy of the other sect was that it repudiated the laws of the *Shariat*, abjured the duties of *Salat* and *Zakat* and went back to the life of Ignorance. At that time only three mosques were left where Allah alone was worshipped, those of Mecca, Medina and Abd-el-Qais.

"As against them were the people who differentiated between *Salat* and *Zakat* and repudiated the binding nature of *Zakat* as an obligatory duty or that it was imperative to deposit it in the Public Treasury. They, in fact, were rebels but were not termed as such because they were aligned with Apostates over the issue and the question of Apostasy was uppermost during those days. Thus, all of them began to be described as 'Men of Apostasy.' The practice of taking up arms against the rebels was introduced from the time of Hazrat Ali because by then they had formed a distinct group and coalesced no more with the pagans and renegades.

"Along with these deniers of *Zakat* were some people who believed in it but were prevented by their tribal leaders etc., from making the deposit. For example, there was the tribe of Bani Yarbu which had collected the *Zakat* and was about to despatch it to Hazrat Abu Bakr but Malih bin Nawira stopped

1. Anasi was put to death during the last days of the Prophet.

them and had the money distributed in the tribe itself. It was these people in respect of whom the controversy arose and Hazrat Omar was doubtful if war could legitimately be made on them. He approached Hazrat Abu Bakr and discussed the matter with him citing the Prophet's Tradition, 'I have been commanded to wage war against the people................' in his support. But Hazrat Omar had gone by the letter of the Tradition without considering its wider implications. It was explained to him that *Zakat* was the claim of wealth, meaning that the question was of the protection of both life and property and it could not be isolated from the relevant stipulations. The injunction of the Prophet was accompanied by two conditions, both of which had to be fulfilled...........Here (i. e., in case of rejectors of *Zakat*), one condition (i.e., of the payment of *Zakat*) was wanting, and, therefore, the injunction could not be applied to them. Besides, Hazrat Abu Bakr likened it to the question of *Salat*, and since wilful rejection of *Salat* was, without doubt, punishable with death, the rejection of *Zakat*, too, ought to be treated in the same way. Thus, the differences were removed and there was a complete agreement of views between them. Once Hazrat Omar was convinced of the justness of Hazrat Abu Bakr's stand he wholeheartedly supported him in the campaign. His remark that 'I, then, realised that he was in the right' shows that he was fully satisfied with Hazrat Abu Bakr's argument."[1]

1. In our view the decision of Hazrat Abu Bakr to take up arms against those who had disowned the Millet, rejected the commands of the *Shariat* and given up *Salat* and other fundamental duties and lapsed into Ignorance (and these were the people whom Khattabi has included in the first category of the Apostates) as well as against those who differentiated between *Salat* and *Zakat* and denied the binding nature of *Zakat* as a duty (whom Kattabi has included in the second category) was based on the ground that they were Apostates who had wantonly rejected the essentials of faith. This is apparent from his remark that "By God ? I will wage war against those who differentiate between *Salat* and *Zakat* for *Zakat* is the claim of wealth." But against those who were willing to pay *Zakat* but instead of depositing it in the public Treasury wanted

(*Continued on the next page*)

The refusal to deposit *Zakat* with the Imam was a blow that could have destroyed the foundations of Islam. It would have opened the floodgates of discord and rebellion. Had Hazrat Abu Bakr vacillated and not put down the movement with a heavy hand it would have led to other evils and there would have been no end to chaos and disruption. After *Zakat* it would have been the turn of *Salat* and a group would have emerged protesting that the Friday and other congregational services were unnecessary and *Salat* could easily be offered up at home. Similarly, about the fasts of *Ramadhan* it would have been asked what was the need to observe them during a particular month when all that was required was that a month should be devoted to fasting in a year and about the *Haj* that the rules and formalities prescribed for it were superfluous and could be disregarded if they did not suit one's convenience. In the end, the institutions of Caliphate and Imamate with which the enforcement of laws and injunctions of Islam and protection of its honour are so closely related would have been reduced to nothing and the unity and solidarity of Islam and Muslims would have foundered at that very time, as it came to pass hundreds of years later. The firm and unbending attitude adopted by Hazrat Abu Bakr may, thus, be said to have been inspired by God and it proved to be decisive in the vindication of Islam and preservation of its sanctity and inner reality. The *Ummat* is agreed on the correctness and wisdom of the stand taken by him and it is also supported by subsequent events that what Hazrat Abu Bakr did to beat back the challenge of Apostasy, which was calculated to tear up the fabric of Islam into shreds, was wholly in conformity with the examples set by the Apostles of God

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to distribute it in their own tribe or were helpless before the tribal leaders his decision to take up arms was prompted by the reason of their being rebels and the waging of war against those who rebel is proved by the Quran and the consensus of Muslim opinion is also in favour of it, The Quran declares : *And if one party of them doeth wrong to the other, fight ye that which doeth wrong till it return unto the ordinance of Allah.* (—xli : 9)

during their lifetime.

Hazrat Uthman

Thanks to the strong action taken by Hazrat Abu Bakr the afore-mentioned arrangement prevailed for sometime and *Zakat* on all categories of goods was deposited in the Public Treasury. But when Hazrat Uthman became the Caliph he permitted *Zakat* on 'unapparent' goods, such as, cash and gold and silver, to be distributed to the deserving or spent on other items of charity by the donor himself while only that which was levied on 'apparent' goods, like agricultural produce and fruit crop and herds of cattle, was to be deposited in *Bait-ul-Mal*.

Writes Imam Abu Bakr Jassas in his Commentary of the Quran :

"*Zakat* was first deposited with the holy Prophet, and then with Hazrat Abu Bakr, Hazrat Omar and Hazrat Uthman. Later, on a certain occassion Hazrat Uthman delivered a speech in which he said, 'This is the month of your *Zakat*. Let those on whom it may be due pay it and, then, defray it on their other goods also.' He permitted the assessees to spend it individually and the right of the Imam was, thus, terminated. Since the decision was taken by an Imam among the just and devout Imams it was enforced immediately in the *Ummat* on the strength of the Prophet's dictum, 'On them (the owners) is placed the responsibility of their goods."[1]

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1. Allama Alauddin Abu Bakr el-Kasani-el-Hanafi (d : 587 A. H.) writes that in respect of the 'unapparent' goods which are generally concentrated in the towns the view held by the Ulema is that the holy Prophet collected *Zakat* payable on them and so did Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Omar, and Hazrat Uthman also did the same for sometime. But when prosperity came and wealth became abundant it was felt by Hazrat Uthman that the collection of *Zakat* on such goods could cause inconvenience to the Ummat and scrutiny and assessment would also be troublesome to well-to-do people. He, therefore, delegated the powers of assessment and distribution of *Zakat* to the donors themselves. (—*El-Bidaye was Sinaye*, p. 38)

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Negligence of Muslim States

The Islamic Caliphate, despite the variations in its moral and religious texture, preserved with the practice of collecting the *Zakat* on 'apparent' goods, and, as we learn from Imam Abu Yusuf's treatise, *El-Kharaj*, and other works dealing with the Caliphate's economic structure, it was maintained till the last days of the Abbasids. Ultimately, this Islamic injunction ceased to be operative in Muslim States which, on the whole, did not conform to the pattern of the *Shariat* and could hardly be described as successors of the Caliphate, at least, in the ethical, social and economic spheres. The whole of the Islamic World was plunged into strife and confusion and the Muslims were deprived of the blessings of the *Shariat*. If the Muslim States, today, are assailed by the forces of heartless capitalism, deceptive socialism and unbalanced communism they are only paying the penalty of their blunder.

> And verily We make them taste the lower punishment (i. e., punishment in this world) before the greater, that haply may return. (—xxxii : 21)

Lowest Limit

Zakat which Islam has enjoined upon Muslims marks the lowest limit for the expression of human sympathy, kindliness and compassion. It is a duty the disregard or violation of which is not in any circumstances tolerable to God. The *Shariat* is empathic in its insistence upon its observance. It has prescribed it as an essential requirement of faith for Muslims.

Besides, Allama Ibn-el-Humam (d. 861 A.H.) observes that the holy Prophet and his two Caliphs maintained the same practice but when the time of Hazrat Uthman came and it was clear that the mood of the Ummat was changing he realised that it would not be proper to enquire into 'unapparent' wealth and left it to them to assess and pay the *Zakat* on such goods. The Companions also did not object to it. It did not mean an outright annulment of the right of the Islam to collect the *Zakat* or an abrogation of the previous order.

(—*Fath-el-Qadeer*, Vol. I, p. 311)

> But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due, then they are your brethren in religion.
>
> (—ix : 11)

A person who abjures *Zakat* or declines wilfuly to pay it will be deemed to have forfeited the claim to be a Muslim. There will be no place for him in the fold of Islam. Such were the men against whom Hazrat Abu Bakr had taken up arms and his action was supported universally by the Companions.

Other Obligations on Wealth

The holy Prophet had, by his teachings and personal example, made it clear to his friends and Companions that *Zakat* was not the be-all-and-end-all of monetary good-doing. It was not the highest form or ultimate stage of charity and generosity. In the words of the holy Prophet, "Beyond question, there are other obligations on wealth aside of *Zakat*." It is related by Fatima Bint-i-Qais that once the Prophet was asked (or she herself asked him) about *Zakat*. He replied, "Beyond question, there are other obligations on wealth aside of *Zakat*." The Prophet then recited the following verse of the Quran :[1]

> It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East or the West ; but righteous is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the Angels and the Scripture and the Prophets ; and giveth his wealth, for lone of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free ; and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor-due. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and times of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God-fearing.
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> (—ii : 177)

The Attitude of the Prophet towards Wealth

The Attitude of the sacred Prophet towards wealth and

1. *Tirmidhi*

family (keeping it in the mind that he possessed the utmost affection for *Ummat* and was its greatest well-wisher and he himself has said. "The best among you is he who is good for his household, and among you, I am the best for my household")[1] was typically illustrative of the Apostolic point of view. It was the attitude of a man to whom the Sublimity and All-powerfulness of the Divine Being was an absolute and self-evident reality, whose morals were the morals of God and who was permanently solicitous of the Day of Resurrection and Final Judgement. *The Day when neither wealth nor progeny will avail (any man) save him who bringeth unto Allah a pure heart.* (—xxvi : 88-89). The holy Prophet was more impatient for the Hereafter than the bird is for the nest after a whole day's flight. He would exclaim : "O God : There is no joy other than the joy of Futurity."[2] Wealth, in his eyes, was of no greater significance than the foam of the sea or the grime of the palm. To him the whole of mankind was the family of Allah and he regarded himself to be the guardian and protector of the orphans, the needy and the destitute. For others he wished ease and comfort, but for his own household, poverty and indigence. Not unoften would he cry out from the depth of his heart : "(What I like is that) I may eat my fill on one day and go without a meal on the other;"[3] and also, "O God ! Bestow upon the descendants of Mohammad only as much provision as may be necessary to sustain life."[4]

The Prophet had no hesitation in conveying to his wives the message of the Lord.

1. *Tirmidhi*
2. *Bukhari*, Vol. II, p. 949
3. It is related by Abu Darda that the Prophet once said, "My Lord asked me if the valleys of Mecca be turned into gold. I replied, 'No my Lord! What I like is that I may eat my fill on one day and go without a meal on the other so that when I am hungry I may remember Thee and be eech Thee like a beggar and when my stomach is full I may thank Thee and sing Thy praises.' "(—*Tirmidhi*).
4. *Bukhari*, Vol. II, p. 957

> O Prophet ! Say unto thy wives : If ye desire the world's life and its adornment, come ! I will content you and will release you with a fair release.
>
> But if ye desire Allah and His Messenger and the abode of the Hereafter, then lo ! Allah hath prepared for the good among you an immense reward.
>
> (—xxxiii : 28-29)

The pious wives, on their part, had willingly chosen to live with him and not with their parents or brothers where every worldly comfort was available to them.

Life of the Prophet and his Family

What, now, was the life of the Prophet's wives had opted for ? Let us hear about it from Hazrat Ayesha herself.

"The members of the Prophet's household", says she, "Never ate even barley bread to their heart's content. For months the oven was not lighted in our house and we lived only on dates and water. When the Prophet died there was nothing in our house which a living creature could eat except a piece of bread I had kept away in the cupboard."[1]

Once Hazrat Omar paid a visit to the Prophet and found to his surprise that the Prophet was sitting on a mat which had made its marks on his body, In a corner of the room there was a small quantity of barley, in another was spread the skin of an animal while just above his head was hanging a water-skin. Hazrat Omar relates that on seeing it tears came into his eyes. The Prophet enquired from him the reason of his weeping and Hazrat Omar replied, "O Prophet of God ! I have every reason to weep. This is the mat which has made deep impressions on your bare body. The room itself is so comfortless while the Chosroes of Persia and the Emperor of Rome are in the midst of their lakes and gardens, though you are the Apostle of Allah. " The Prophet remarked, "Are you caught in two minds ? These are the men to whom all the things of comfort and enjoyment

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1. *Bukhari and Muslim*

have been granted here in this life.'[1]

Dislike of Unnecessary Goods

The Prophet did not like, even for a short time, to keep money or provisions in his house in excess of his needs. In the same way, he did not allow the goods of charity, which were the property of the common people, to remain with him for a moment. He would have no peace of mind till they had been given away.

It is related by Hazrat Ayesha that "I had six or seven dinars during the last illness of the holy Prophet. The Prophet commanded me to distribute them but due to his illness I could not find the time for it. Later, he asked what I had done with the dinars and I told him that owing to pre-occupation with his illness I had forgotten about them. The Prophet, then, sent for the dinars and placing them on the palm of his hand remarked, 'What would the assumption be of the Apostle of Allah if he joined Him in such a state that these were lying with him."[2]

It was the practice of the Prophet to distribute the articles of charity as soon as they were received. Uqba bin el-Harith relates that "once in Medina I offered the Asr prayers behind the Prophet. The Prophet finished the prayer-service and left abruptly for the apartment of one of his wives. The people could not understand it and they were worried. On returning, the Prophet felt that we were surprised at the manner of his departure. He, thereupon, explained that in the course of the service he had remembered that there was some gold in his house and he did not like that a night should pass with the metal still lying with him."

The Prophet guided his Companions and the entire *Ummat* along identical lines and infused into them the same values of generosity and self-denial. So forcefully and earnestly did he exhort the people to practise charity that as anyone reads the

1. *Ibid.*
2. *Musnad-i-Ahmad*

relevant Traditions he begins to doubt if he really has a claim over anything that is in excess of his needs. When we look into ourselves and reflect on the things of comfort and luxury we freely make use of in everyday life we are caught in a curious predicament. Everything seems so unnecessary, redundant and superfluous. The costly dresses, the sumptuous meals, the luxurious carriages—all stand out to be wrong and wasteful although what the Prophet said appertained only to advice and exhortation and there is no law against it. But, such was the way of the Prophet.

> Verily in the Messenger of Allah ye have a good example for him who looketh into Allah and the Last Day, and remembreth Allah much.
>
> (—xxxiii : 21)

The Prophet once said, "He who has a conveyance in excess should give it to him who is without a conveyance ; he who has a meal in excess should give it to him who is without a meal."[1]

He also said, "He who has a meal for two should share it with the third, and he who has a meal for three should share it with the fourth."[2]

Another of his Traditions reads : "He is not my follower who eats his fill and sleeps comfortably in the night while his neighbour, by his side, goes hungary, even though he may not be aware of it."[3]

It is related that once a man came to the Prophet and said. "O Prophet of Allah ! Provide me with clothes." "Is there no one among your neighbours," asked the Prophet, "who may have two pairs of clothes in excess of what he needs ?" The man replied that more than one of his neighbours were in that happy position. The Prophet, thereupon, remarked, "May Allah not bring him and you t gether in heaven."[4]

1. *Abu Da'ud*
2. *Tirmidhi*
3. *Tabarani*
4. *Ibid.*

Worth of Man and Importance of Compassion in Islam

The holy Prophet placed man on such a high pedestal of nobility and ascribed such great virtue to taking care of his needs and bringing succour to him that no higher and more admirable conception of humanity and brotherliness can be possible. From the Islamic point of view a shirker and transgressor in respect of the rights of man is no better than a renegade and a backslider in the path of God. It is stated in one of the Divinely inspired Traditions of the sacred Prophet that on the Day of Judgement God will say to His slaves, "I fell ill and you did not visit me". The slave will reply, "Thou art the Lord of the Worlds ; how could I visit Thee ?" God will thereupon, say, "Did you not know that such-and-such a slave of Mine was ill but you did not care to visit him ? Had you gone to see him (in order to be of comfort or help) you would have found it with Me." He will, again, ask, "O son of Adam ! I asked you for food and you did not give it to Me." The slave will reply, "Thou art the Lord of the Worlds ; how could I give you food ?" God will, then, say, "Are you not aware that such-and-such a slave of Mine begged you for food but you did not give it to him ? Had you fed him you would have found it with Me." God, again, will ask, "O son of Adam ! I asked you for water and you did not give it to me." The slave will reply, "Thou art the Lord of the Worlds ; how could I give Thee water ?" God will say, "Such-and-such a slave of Mine asked you for water but you did not give it to him. Had you given it to him you would have found it with Me."[1]

The limit of benevolence, kindliness and fellow-feeling was that the holy Prophet laid it down as a permanent law and maxim that "no one among you (the Muslims) can become perfect in faith until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself."[2]

1. *Muslim*
2. *Bukhari*

Living Models of the Teachings of the Prophet

The life and character of the Prophet had made such a powerful impact on the hearts and minds of the Companions that their attitude towards life, family and property was largely determined by his own example and they, on the whole, had become the living symbols of his precepts. Of them, those who were nearer to him, naturally, bore a deeper imprint of his personality. The deeds of piety, compassion and self-denial that were habitually performed by them in daily life are worthy of being written in letters of gold in the annals of religion and ethics. No community in the world can boast of such a marvellous legacy of virtue and moral excellence.

It is a well known fact about Caliph Abu Bakr that once his wife wanted to eat *halwa* (a kind of sweetmeat made of flour, ghee and sugar) She began to save a few pice from the daily allowance she received from the Public Treasury, and, thus, collected the money needed for its preparation. When Hazrat Abu Bakr came to know of it, he returned her savings to *Bait-ul-Maal* and instructed that her allowance may be reduced by what she used to save for the dish since it appeared that she could do without it.

The sacrificial spirit of Hazrat Omar and the life of rugged simplicity and asceticism he led have become proverbial. It will suffice here to relate the incident of his journey to Jabia (in Syria) as the Caliph of Muslims and the Head of the Islamic State. In the words of a renowned historian, Hazrat Omar "was riding on a camel (and) his head was shining in the sun. There was neither a cap on it nor an *Amama* (a tiara worn commonly by the Arabs). His legs were dangling on the two sides of the saddle and under him was only an ordinary woollen cushion which served for his bed when he halted and for the pack-saddle when he rode. He also carried a bag which was stuffed with cotton-wool. He used it as a pouch while he travelled and a pillow while he rested. His shirt was made of a coarse cloth. It was old and was also torn on one side."[1]

1. *El-Bidayah Wan-Nihaya*, Vol. VII, pp. 59-60

Hazrat Uthman was the wealthiest man among his friends. Of him Shurhabeel tells that he entertained others on a lavish scale but ate only bread and oil himself. Hazrat Ali is included among the most self-denying of the Companions. His life of rigid self-restraint and austerity has been described in the following words by Darar bin Damora:

"He shunned the world and its allurements and liked the darkness and solitude of the night. He had a reflective nature and would often appear to be lost in thought. In that state he would make movements with his hands which showed that his attention was turned inwards. His dress was simple and his food was abstemious. By God! He looked to be one of us (the common people). If we asked anything from him he would answer promptly and when we went to see him he would start the conversation himself. When we invited him, he would readily accept our invitation."[1]

The ennobling influence of the Prophet's character was felt in the lives of the people of his household, the illustratious Caliphs and the holy Companions in proportion o the closeness of their association with him. The place occupied by Hazrat Ayesha (his most beloved wife) in devoutness, self-abnegation and magnanimity is very high. It has, for instance, been put on record by the chroniclers that once she distributed a lakh of dirhams as charity despite the fact that her own clothes were worn-out and she was fasting. After it was over, the maid said to her it would have been better if she had saved a few dirhams for *Iftar* (fast-breaking meal). Hazrat Ayesha replied, "I would have, had you reminded me of it at that time." She had given away a lakh of dirhams and forgotten her own hunger.[2]

Early Islamic Society

Self-effacement had become a second nature with the Companions. Ibn-i-Omar tells that "we have seen days when none

1. Ibn-i-Jauzi: *Sifatus Safwa*
2. Haakim: *Al-Mustadrak*

of us had a greater claim on his wealth than his Muslim brother."[1]

Consequently, there took place events which joined the frontiers of kindliness with those of fellowship and carried fellowship to the heights of altruism and self-sacrifice. It is related by Ibn-i-Omar that "once a Companion of the holy Prophet received the head of a goat as a gift. Thinking that such-and-such a person had a greater need of it, he sent it to him. But he, too, thought the same and sent it to another friend. The head of the goat, thus, travelled from one person to another till after making a round of seven homes it came back to the Companion who had received it first."[2]

Passing from the Companions to the *Tab'een* we learn from Hazrat Hasan Basri that during their time the moral and spiritual state of Muslims was such that at day-break a man from among them would announce: "O you honseholders! Take care of the orphan in your midst: take care of the helpless in your midst[3]"

Ahead of all others were the tribe of Bani Hashim and the people of the Prophet's household. They pursued the path of truth and earnestness with single-minded devotion. Innumerable instances of the generosity and kindheartedness of Imam Hasan and Abdullah bin Jafar are recorded in history. Imam Ali bin Husain bin Ali (known popularly by the name of Zainul Abedin) had received the largest share of these virtues from his ancestors. It is related by Ibn-i-Ishaq that during the lifetime of the Imam many persons did not know from whom were they getting their livelihood. When the Imam died and the supply stopped they came to know that it was he who used to bring the provisions to them secretly in the night. On the death of the Imam it was discovered that his body bore marks of the bags he

1. *Bukhari*
2. *Ikya-ul-Uloom*, Vol. II, p. 174
3. *El-Adab-ul-Mufradhil-Bukhari*

used to carry to the homes of the poor and the needy.[1]

Stray Examples

The legacy of generosity and unselfishness was preserved by the Muslims as a sacred trust and their religious and spiritual leaders functioned in all parts of the world as the most faithful representatives of the glorious way of life. That no money should be left in the house when the night fell was regarded by these pious and truthful men as a regular rule of conduct. They never failed to place the needs of others above their own needs and to pass on promptly to the poor and the destitute what they received from the better off members of the society by way of a gift or donation. There motto was that "it (charity) should be taken from the well-to-do and distributed to the poor." Like their hearts, their table-spreads, too, were larger, wider and more open to the common people than those of the rich men and the noble lords. It was once remarked by Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani (universally accepted as the leader of the whole class of *Sufia-i-Keram*,—the venerable Sufi ascetics) about himself that "there is a hole in the palm of my hand. Nothing stays in it. If I had even a thousand dirhams they would be spent up before dusk."[2] On another occasion, he is reported to have said in a wistful mood," I wish the whole world was given to me and I went on feeding the hungry."[3]

These evolved souls, these men of piety and goodliness, were found in various parts of the far-flung world of Islam. They were the true blossom of the 'Tree of Apostleship.' They had sprung from the same 'Goodly Tree' about which it is stated in the Quran :

> Its roots (are) set firm ; its branches (are) reaching into heaven; giving its fruit at every season by permission of its Lord. (—xiv : 24-25)

1. These incidents have mostly been reproduced from Mustafa Saba'ees, *Ishtrikatul-Islam.*
2. *Qalaedul Jawahir*, p. 10
3. *Qalaedul Jawahir*, p. 10

Volumes can be written on the prodigious deeds of religious charity and selflessness which marked the lives of these peerless specimens of humanity. To illustrate our point we will refer to a few of such events here.

About Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia it is related by his attendant that he took the *Saheri*[1] to him which included all kinds of dishes. But the Sheikh partook very little of it and for the rest he instructed that it should be kept carefully for children. Khwaja Abdur Rahim, whose duty it was to take the *Saheri* to him, tells that often he ate nothing. The Khwaja would implore him to take some nourishment as he ate very little at the time of *Iftar*, and if he also did not eat anything at *Saheri* he would become very weak. Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia would burst into tears at it and say, "How many poor and helpless people are lying on the platforms of mosques without a morsel of food? They spend their nights in starvation. How, then, can this food go down my throat?" The attendant reports that often he used to take back the meal untouched by the Sheikh.

When the hour of his death drew near the Sheikh summoned all the disciples and attendants to his bedside and said, "Be a witness to it that if Iqbal (the name of an attendant) has held back any of the provisions in the house he will have to answer for it tomorrow, on the Day of Judgement." Iqbal affirmed that he had spared nothing Everything had been given away in the name of God. That fine, generous-hearted man really had done so. Except for the foodgrains which could suffice for the needs of the inmates of the *Khanqah*[2] for a few days he had distributed all that was in the house to the poor. Syed Husain Kirmani reported to the Sheikh that everything had been given to the needy save the foodgrains. The Sheikh was very angry with Iqbal when he came to know of it and calling him to his side enquired why had he held in reserve the 'rotten dust' (the foodgrains). He, then, ordered those around him to collect a crowd

1. The meal which Muslims take a little before dawn when fasting.
2. Religious establishment for holy men.

and, when it had gathered, the Sheikh said to it. "Go and break the earthern jars in which the grain is stored. Take it away and leave nothing." The multitude made quick work of it and within a short time the stor ehouse was empty."[1]

We will cite another example of the same way of living from the biography of Syed Mohammad Saeed Ambalavi.[2] It is stated by his biographer that once Nawab Roshanuddaula[3] presented to him a purse of Rs. 10,000 (which must have been equal to several lakhs of rupees today) for the construction of the *Khanqah.* The saint advised him to leave the money and go and have a little rest as the work would commence in the afternoon. After Nawab Roshanuddaula had retired, he sent the entire amount to the widows, orphans and other needy persons of Ambala, Thanesar, Sirhand and Panipat through his disciples. When Roshanuddaula returned in the evening the saint said to him, "You could never have earned so much of Divine reward by the construction of the *Khanqah* as you have by serving so many poor and helpless people." On another occasion, Emperor Farrukh Siyar, Nawab Roshanuddaula and Nawab Abdullah Khan sent to him Rs. 3,00,000 with their petitions. The divine had all the money distributed among the indigent and well-born families of the nighbouring towns and villages.[4]

It may be said that these were the deeds of the ascetics who had renounced the world and dwelt on a different plane, well away from the trials and tribulations of life. What is to be seen is whether similar instances of unalloyed asceticism, self-sacrifice and contentment were easy to get among the other sections of the *Ummat* also. Here, too, the verdict of history is in the affirmative for in the Islamic society there were found, at every stage, men who conformed to the noble standard set by the holy

1. *Siyar-ul-Aulia.*
2. Known popularly as Syed Meeran Bheek (d. 1131 A. H).
3. A minister in the court of the Moghul Emperor, Farrukh Siyar.
4. Manazir Ahsan Gilani: *Nizam-i-Taleem-o-Tarbiyat*, Vol. II, pp. 221-222

Prophet in their attitude towards life, worldly possessions, relatives, neighbours and countrymen. They belonged to all classes of people, including kings, noblemen, saints and servants. To take up only two examples, one from among the scholars and the other from among the rulers. The name of Sheikhul Islam Ibn-i-Taimiya comes first to the mind in the former category of earnest and deep-hearted Muslims. Those who do not know about him well enough are often inclined to imgaine that he was a dry, cold-blooded theologian who had little regard for human emotions, but his contemporary, Hafiz Ibn-i-Faizullah-el-Umari, writes that "heaps of gold, silver and other goods would come to him and he distributed them all till nothing was left. If he ever laid aside anything it was only with the object of giving it to some particular person............His generosity knew no bounds, and, sometimes when there was nothing to give he would hand over the clothes he was wearing to the needy."

From the class of kings and conquerors Sultan Salahuddin Ayubi makes an ideal choice. He was the ruler of the largest Muslim Empire of his time and had inflicted a crushing blow to the mightiest military power of the then known world. His friend, Ibn-i-Shaddad tells that the entire assets of the Sultan at the time of his death amounted to a mere 47 dirhams and a gold coin. He left no other property to his descendants.

This powerful monarch whose empire extended from the north of Syria in Asia to the Nubian desert of Sudan in Africa departed from the world in such a state that there was not enough money in the house to pay for his funeral. Ibn-i-Shaddad writes:

"Not a pice was spent from his legacy on his burial. Everything had to be borrowed, even the bundles of straw for the grave. The shroud was provided by his minister and chronicler, Qadi Fadil, from a legitimate source".

The austere and self-denying way of living was not peculiar to any generation or school of thought, but all the theological masters, divines and spiritual leaders punctiliously abided by it. 'A new day, a new provision' was the guiding principle of their

life. They never saved anything for the future nor did they economise in the fear of becoming empty-handed. This is not a romantic tale of the bygone days. Even today there are men of religion and spirituality among Muslims who do not like that anything in excess of their requirements should remain with them which might be needed by someone or that a night should pass with money lying with them that was above their need. It is not due to the philosophy of mortification or renunciation of the world, nor motivated by the desire to interfere with the Divine scheme of things or to create hardship where God has provided ease or to forbid and disallow what has been declared by Him to be lawful and legitimate. These men of God, also, do not take to this path because of any constraint. They are inspired solely by the fear of Divine Reckoning, by the love of mankind and by the eagerness to take after the confirmed practice of the sacred Prophet and to follow in his steps not only in charity and self-sacrifice but in all good and virtuous deeds.

Last Phase

Notwithstanding the failings, against which Muslim reformers have been striving to the best of their ability, the Islamic society is still conspicuous for fellowship, large-heartedness and compassion. Thanks to the precepts of Islam the spirit of mutual help, sympathy and kindliness has penetrated into the inner depths of its consciousness. The Muslims are comparatively free from the evils of crude materialism and worship of the stomach. In the Muslim society there has never been a dearth of men to raise the banner of revolt against excessive attachment to worldly things. The force and extent of competition, selfishness and greed is definitely less in it than in other societies which believe in no other life beyond the worldly existence and aspire only for material ease and comfort.[1]

1. The present author was told in Arabia by aged and reliable persons

Continued on next page

In the Muslim society there is a greater scope for the promotion of social justice and other laudable social and moral ideals because of the instinctive respect it has for the Islamic way of life, to whatever degree it may be, and the existence of the spiritual tie which has invested its diverse elements with a sense of identity and brotherliness.

Instinctive Fellow-feeling or Enforced Equality?

An attribute common to the different social and economic movements popular in the modern world is lack of faith in

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who had seen the good, old days that the attitude of the merchants of Mecca towards the members of their community was marked by genuine well-wishing. They said that there used to be traders who, if a customer came to them in the evening and they felt that they had sold enough goods for the day and made the income they had hoped for while their neighbour had not been so lucky, gently advised him to make his purchases from the adjoining shop as not many customers had come to it on that day.

Likewise, Mohammad Asad, recounting the impressions of his stay in Damascus in his admirable book 'The Road to Mecca' writes, "It was with the excitement of a new understanding, with my eyes opened to things I had not suspected before, that I wandered in those summer days in the alleys of the old bazaar of Damascus and recognised the spiritual restfulness in the life of its people. Their inner security could be observed in the way they behaved toward one another: in the warm dignity with which they met or parted;.........in the manner in which the shopkeepers dealt with one another. Those traders in the little shops...........seemed to have no grasping fear and no envy in them: so much so that the owner of a shop would leave it in the custody of his neighbour and competitor wherever it became necessary for him to be away for a while. I often saw a potential customer stop before an unattended stall, obviously debating within himself whether to wait for the return of the vendor or to move on to the adjoining stall—and invariably the neighbouring trader, the competitor, would step in to enquire after the customer's wants and sell him the required goods—not his own goods, but those of his absent neighbour—and would leave the purchase price on the neighbour's bench. Where in Europe could one have witnessed a like transaction?" (pp. 125-26).

humanity. The leaders of these movements and their theoreticians have a special liking for a regimented and restricted sort of equality over instinctive fellow-feeling and kindliness. They overlook the fact that man does not live by earning and spending alone nor can mere partnership or equality in material possessions fill the vacuum in his life. There is a greater need of genuine human sympathy in life than equality of income or community of means of production. Sometimes a tear springing from the bottom of a bleeding heart proves to be more efficacious than piles of gold and silver.

All men are dependent on one another. No one is above the operation of the law of inter-dependence. What, however, is needed for sharing each other's grief is a genuine warmth of feeling and mildness of temperament If this is kept in mind the teachings of the sacred Prophet will seem to include all the different aspects of sympathy and fellowship. Speaking of the various kinds of charity and good-doing, the Prophet once said:

"Your doing justice between two persons is charity; your helping a man to mount a horse (or carriage) is charity; your lifting up his luggage and putting it (on the mount or vehicle) is charity; your saying a good thing is charity; your taking a step towards *Salat* is charity, and your removing an obstacle from the road is charity."[1]

It is related that the Prophet once, said, "The distressed should help the needy". One being asked what should one do if one was not in a position to help the needy, the Prophet replied, "Enjoin what is good." The Companions again asked, "And if it too may not be possible"? The Prophet remarked, "Abstain from evil. This also is charity."[2]

It is related that the Prophet once remarked, "Your lending a helping hand to anyone engaged in a work or enabling a clumsy worker to do his job properly is also charity." On being enquired what should a person do if he was too weak to render

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1. *Saheehain*
2. *Saheehain*

such a service, the Prophet replied, "Let people remain safe from your mischief. That will be charity on your ego."[1]

Yet another Tradition of the Prophet reads ;

"Your smiling in your brother's face is charity ; your bidding what is good is charity ; your forbidding what is wrong is charity ; your putting a man who has lost his way on the right path is charity ; your assisting a man who has a defect in the eye is charity for you ; your removing a stone, thorn or bone from the road is charity for you ; and your emptying the bucket into the bucket of your brother is charity for you."[2]

The preference accorded to enforced equality over natural kindliness and fellow-feeling has resulted in the establishment, in most of the countries, of a society that has given a decidedly commercial orientation to human personality. It is a narrow, selfish and mechanical society in which no one's life or honour is secure. A cut-throat competition is going on in it all the time with people plotting to bring down one another through deceit, forgery or spying.

The sense of responsibility and keennes to perform one's duty to the best of one's ability have disappeared. People behave like stray cattle whose sole object in life is to roam about and feed upon whatever falls within their reach. Every kind of responsibility has been thrown upon the State. One conducts oneself in relation to society like a witless child. With the State doing everything for everybody the noble ideals of human sympathy, generosity and self-denial have lost their meaning.

On the other hand, compassion and benevolence, arising out of the inmost recesses of the heart, and peace, serenity, contentment, trustfulness and self-assurance were seen in their most glorious light in the original Islamic society and their influence was felt in every walk of life. But this radical transformation of human disposition was not peculiar to that age alone. It can be brought about at any time. Any society which

1. *Saheehain*
2. *Ibid.*

adopts for its ideal the spontaneous feeling of sympathy and kind-heartedness, in contrast to enforced equality, will be blessed with a true bond of love and affection. Its members will become the well-wishers of each-other, acknowledging each-other's rights with an open heart and deposing against each-other with truth. Each generation will bear witness to the virtue and excellence of the preceding generation and pray to God for its salvation. It is of such men that the Quran has said :

> And those who come after them and say : Our Lord! Forgive us and our brethren who were before us in the faith, and place not in our hearts any rancour towards those who believe. Our Lord Thou art Full of Pity, Merciful.
>
> (—lix : 10)

This, in brief, is the picture of true Islamic society in which everyone behaves as the mirror of his brother, wishing to see him free from blemish and preferring for him what he prefers for himself.

> Why did not the believers, men and women, when ye heard it (the slander), think good of their own folk, and say : It is a manifest untruth ?
>
> (—xxiv : 12)

The holy Prophet has alluded to this enviable state in these few words : "In kindliness and affection the Muslims are like a single body. If any part of it is stricken with disease, the whole body develops fever and restlessness."[1]

In such a society honesty and gentlemanliness, truth and trustworthiness become the order of the day and everybody acts as if he was his brother's custodian.

The Prophet said : "Every Muslim is a Muslim's brother. He neither harms him himself nor leaves him alone (when he is in need of help). He neither tells a lie to him, nor bears a grudge against him, nor puts him to shame. The life, honour and property of a Muslim are sacred for one another.[2]"

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1. *Saheehain*
2. *Tirmidhi*

Life in many countries has, on the contrary, become a veritable curse, a specimen of Hell in misery and wickedness.

> Every time a nation entereth (the Hell), it will curse its sister nation. (—VII : 38)

In the modern totalitarian States, for instance, when a new Dictator comes into power, he considers it a duty to denounce his predecessor and charge him with treason, dishonesty and other grave malpractices. Even if a person becomes a ruler for a day he leaves no stone unturned to wreak a terrible vengeance on his critics and adversaries.

> And when he turneth away from thee his efforts in the land is to make mischief therein and to destroy the crops and the cattle, though Allah loveth not mischief. (—II : 205)

For him who still opts out for the path of folly and wretchedness the pronouncement of the Quran is :

> Would ye exchange that which is higher for that which is lower ? Go down to any country and there ye shall find it. (—II : 61)

SAUM
(Fasting)

O ye who believe ! Fasting is prescribed to you, as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may learn self-restraint. (-ii : 183)

III

IN the Divine scheme of creation man occupies a place midway between the beast and the angel. In his nature the attributes of the two diametrically opposed species are blended in a most exquisite manner. By disposition and temperament he signifies a curious mixture of the animal and angelic propensities. For the high office to which he was ordained and the noble mission that had been entrusted to him neither the animals nor the angels were suited. This is the duty and responsibility of Divine Vicegerency, Trusteeship and Worship. It has been alluded to in the Quran in these words:

> And when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! We are about to place a Viceroy in the earth, they said: Wilt Thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we, we sing Thy hymn and sanctify Thee? He said: Surely I know that which ye know not. (—ii: 30)
>
> Lo! We offered the Trust unto the heavens and the earth and the hills, but they shrank away from bearing it and were afraid of it. And man assumed it. Lo! he hath proved a tyrant and a fool. (—xxxiii: 72)
>
> We created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Us. We seek no livelihood from them, nor do We ask that they should feed Us. (—li: 56-57)

Pre-requisities of Vicegerency

The office of Vicegerency demands that man should not only cultivate a close affinity with the Divine Being he is going

to represent but also with the place where he has to carry out his mission Consequently, from God, the Almighty Creator, he imbibed a reflection of His Most Excellent Attributes, such as, Loftiness and Sublimity, Freedom and Unsolicitiousness, Mercy and Benevolence, Kindliness and Compassion, Patience and Affability, Omnipotence and Severity and Cleanliness and Purity. The truth of it is also supported by the fact that man has always admired these virtues and derived a deeply felt pleasure from the thought of them and held their upholders in high esteem.

From the world man acquired its essential qualities and even condescended to share its weaknesses so that he might obtain a first-hand knowledge of the circumstances that were peculiar to it and be able to work up its wealth and resources to the best of advantage. It is for this reason that feelings, conditions and impulses of hunger, thirst and sex, love of ease and curiosity and creativeness, aptitude for trade and industry; and desire for variety and change have been made a part of his being.

Tussle between Body and Spirit

Man is a combination of body and soul. The soul pull him towards its origin and reminds him of his true destiny. It opens within him the window through which he can behold the beauty and expansiveness of the Celestial World and inspires him to revolt against the ugly, materialistic conception of life and soar high into the great beyond by breaking open the golden cage he has been imprisoned in. It invites him to spend a few hours of his life away from the monotonous routine of eating and drinking and seeking appeasement of the other urges of the flesh (even if it be only once in a year) and taste the spiritual joy of hunger and thirst (with the means of supporting life available in plenty) which is not felt even in the enjoyment of delicious foods and drinks. It holds the brief spell man devotes to inner contentment and tranquility, and freedom from sensual appetites as the real worth of life and a priceless moment of felicity and self-realisation. This all is the miracle of the soul that has been breathed into man from the heavenly world.

> They will ask thee concerning the Spirit. Say: The Spirit is by the command of my Lord. (—xvii : 85)
>
> And (We) have breathed into him of Our Spirit. (—xv : 29)

Together with it, the body of man pulls him towards its own source and origin. that is, the earth which is the home of crudeness and debasement.

> Verily, We created man of potter's clay of black mud altered. (xv : 26)
>
> Then ask them (O Mohammad): Are they stronger as a creation, or those (others) whom We have created? Lo! We created them of plastic clay. (—xxxvii : 11)
>
> We created man of clay like the potter's. (—lv : 14)

When the hold of the Spirit weakens and man passes under the control of his physical self he is swept off his feet by the powerful currents of sensuality and luxuriousness. Self-indulgence becomes the motto of his life and his ingenuity is directed towards inventing ways and means for the satisfaction of his carnal propensities which militate against all canons of law, health, morality and religion. Man becomes a gourmand and eating becomes a passion with him. He is obsessed with the thought of new dishes, new appetizers and new digestives. Thus, with all the wisdom and progress he may boast of and the high level of economic well-being he is supposed to have attained, there is little to distinguish him from the beasts of the field. His sphere of activity extends only from the dining room to the toilet between which his whole life is spent. He lives solely for animal gratification and his keenness for everything except food is blunted. He eats so that he may earn more and earns so that he may eat more. Earning and spending, eating and luxuriating he lays waste his life. An excellent portrait of these 'human quadrupeds' has been drawn in the Quran.

> Those who disbelieve take their comfort in his life, and eat even as the cattle eat, and Fire is their habitation. (—xlvii : 12)

Such is the predisposition of the body. Devoid of the light—

of spirituality, it is pitifully susceptible to lustfullness and carnality.

> Recite unto them the tale of him unto whom We gave Our Revelations, but he sloughed them off, so Satan overtook him and he became of those who lead astray.
>
> And had We willed We could have raised him by their means, but he clung to the earth and followed his own lust. Therefore, his likeness is as the likeness of a dog; if thou attackest him he panteth with his tongue out, and if thou leavest him he panteth with his tongue out. Such is the likeness of people who deny Our Revelations. Narrate unto them the history (of the men of old), that haply they may take thought. (—vii : 175-6)

Effects on Human Life, Religion and Ethics

The history of religion and ethics is, in reality, a lengthened shadow of the struggle between the body and the spirit. When the moral and emotional nature of man gained an ascendancy over him he laid the foundation of asceticism in life, took to sack-cloth and ashes and began to revel in self-mortification, penance and famishment. He forsook sleep, abandoned the towns and made his abode in the forests. The anchorities of medieval Europe offer a typical illustration of it.[1]

> But monasticism they themselves invented—We had not ordained it for them—for seeking Allah's pleasure—and even that they observed not with right observance.
>
> (—lvii : 27)

Whenever man was misled into adopting the sordid routine of excessive abstinence and self-torture as a means to spiritual salvation it resulted in his physcial as well as intellectual enfeeblement; family ties were broken and the society was thrown into a state of confusion and disorder. He relinquished the duty of Vicegerency that had been assigned to him by God;

1. Detail of the anchorite movement in medieval Europe are given in W. E. H. Lecky's *History of European Morals*, and the author's own book published under the title of *Islam and the World.*

and abandoning the path of struggle and endeavour preferred the angles as models for imitation. Instead of being the object of their envy he himself became envious of them.

On the other hand, when man was overcome with material urges and animal propensities he freely violated the limits of religion and morality and made the worship of the visible phenomenon and the pursuit of corporeal impulsions the sole objects of his existence. He responded zealously to the promptings of the flesh and there could be no stopping of him. He brooked no delay nor suffered an interference. In the outcome the furnaces of his inner existence were frozen and his conscience and higher mental powers became stunted. It was only the stomach that mattered. Crimes and injustices became rampant which brought down the human beings to the level of the wild beasts that devour not only their kind but also their own brood. All the wars of history, all the conflicts between nations and states (with the exception of *Jehad* which is waged solely for a religious cause) are the products of this very spirit of partisanship, arrogance and aggrandisement.

Mortal Effects

When the beast within man is let loose and the stomach becomes the pivot of human existence nothing is allowed to stand between him and the fulfilment of his desires. He grows excessively intolerant of checks and restraints and of everything that reminds him of his end or gives the warning of the Day of Final Requital. Often his whole life is spent without a moment of inner peace or awakening. The very idea of Divine worship and remembrance is disagreeable to him and he finds little joy in any activity which is not related to the pleasing of the senses.

> And truly it is hard save for the humble-minded who know that they will have to meet their Lord, and that unto Him they are returning. (—ii : 45-46)
>
> When they stand up to worship they perform it languidly and to be seen of men, and are mindful of Allah but little. (—iv : 142)

Fulfilment of Man's Destiny

Time and again Divine Apostleship has come to the rescue of mankind against the onslaughts of crude materialism and sensuality. It has freed the heart from the mournful domination of animalism and removed from it the impurities that had reduced it to a mere lump of flesh. By putting morality and spiritualism in their proper perspective and imparting to man a healthier, nobler and broader outlook of life it has prepared him afresh for the fulfilment of the underlying purpose of his creation which can be summed up in the three words of *Ibadat* (Worship), *Vilayat* (Devoutness) and *Khilafat* (Vicegerency). This was a task which could not be achieved solely through the spirituality of the angles or the corporeity of the animals. For it, the annual routine of fasting was prescribed which could, to some extent, relax the hold of sensuality and introduce, in its place, as much of faith and spiritualism as could be effective in the maintenance of moderation, poise and equilibrium in life. This spiritual discipline is designed to enable man to exercise self-restraint when the evil propensities threaten to overwhelm him, to overcome the harmful effects of over-eating and to cultivate within him, as far as possible, a likeness of Divine Morals.

Objects

Shedding light on the objects of fasting, Imam Ghazali writes [1]

"The object of fasting is that man should produce within him a semblance of the Divine Attribute of *Samadiyat* (i. e., Freedom from want), that he should, as far as possible, take after the angels and cast off the beastly propensities because the angels are free from desire and the place of man, too, is above the animals and he has, further, been given the power of discrimination to resist the pressure of inordinate appetites. He is, of course, inferior to angels in the sense that desire often overpowers him and he has to strive hard to subdue it. When

1. *Ihya-ul-Uloom*, Vol. I, p. 212

he succumbs to sensual propensities he degenerates into the 'lowliest of lowly' and joins the herds of cattle while when he conquers them attains the dizzy heights of the heavenly host and begins to dwell on the plane of the angels."

Similarly, Allama Ibn-i-Qaiyyim says:[1]

"The purpose of fasting is that the spirit of man was released from the clutches of desire and moderation prevailed in his carnal self, and, through it, he realised the goal of purification and everlasting felicity. It is aimed at curtailing the intensity of desire and lust by means of hunger and thirst, at inducing man to realise how many were there in the world like him who had to go even without a small quantity of food, at making it difficult for the Devil to deceive him, and at restraining his organs from turning towards things in which there was the loss of both the worlds. Fasting, thus is the bridle of the God-fearing, the shield of the crusaders and the discipline of the virtuous."

Proceeding further the Allama remarks :

"Fasting is most efficacious in the protection of the external limbs and internal organs. It guards against disorders resulting from the accumulation of the effete matter. It expels the toxins that are injurious to health and cures the ailments which develop in the body due to over-indulgence. It is beneficial for health and most helpful in leading a life of piety and good-doing.

"Says the Quran :

> O ye who believe : Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before ye, that ye may ward off evil. (—ii : 183)

"And the holy Prophet has said : Fasting is a shield."

"Hence, a person who wishes to marry but does not have the means to support a family is advised to observe fasting. It has been prescribed as a sovereign remedy for him, the object being to demonstrate that since the advantages of fasting were evident from the point of view of cammonsense God had enjoined it as an act of mercy for the protection of His slaves."

1. *Zad-el-Ma'ad*, Vol, I, p. 152

"For the reason that," Allama Ibn-i-Qaiyyim goes on to say, "the correction of the heart and steadfastness are dependent upon the pursuit of the path of Allah and upon inner peace, repentance and single-minded devotion, distraction is extremely harmful for it. Over-eating, "too much of mixing with people and unnecessary conversation and volubility are the things that upset one's composure and serenity and make a man drift from the straight path. God, therefore, in His Divine Mercy, thought fit to prescribe fasting for his bondmen so that they could be purged of the evil effects of intemperance and over-eating which prevented mankind from attaining the cherished goal of God realisation and it might prove useful to them in both the worlds and none of their interests, temporary or permanent, were harmed."[1]

Fasting in Ancient Religions

Hinduism is one of the ancient religions in which fasts are observed and a vast majority of the population of our country professes it. We have the following to learn about the form and manner of fasting in that faith from Prof. Mahadevan of Madras[2]

"A different group of festivals are the purificatory fasts. The followers of each cult have their own special days in the year which they spend exclusively in prayer and worship. Many people on these occasions fast and keep vigil during the night, read from the sacred texts and keep their minds engaged in thoughts on God. The day known as Vaikuvantha-Ekadasi is sacred to Visnu. Not only Vaishanavas but even other Hindus observe this day as a day of fast and prayer. The whole night which is thought to be auspicious for the worship of Siva is the Sivaratri. There are the days, again, on which the women fast and offer prayer to the Devi in her various manifestations like Gauri and Lakshmi. These fasts are significantly named Vratas

1. *Zad-el-Ma'ad*, Vol, I, p. 168
2. Mahadevan, T. M. P. : *Outlines of Hinduism*, p. 172

or Vows. They are intended for the purification of the soul and providing it with spiritual food."

Speaking of some other faiths Allama Syed Sulaiman Nadwi observes :[1]

"Among the ancient Egyptians fasting seems to have been associated with many religious festivals, notably with that of Isis, but it does not appear that, so far as the common people were concerned, the observance of the fasts was compulsory. In Athens only the women attending the festival used to keep the fasts on the third day of the Thosmophoria. Among the Zoroastrians, though fasting is not prescribed for the common people, it appears from a verse in the Sacred Book that the command of fasting was present in their midst. For the priests, in particular, the five-year fast was compulsory."

Judaism

Among the Jews fasting was instituted in Biblical times as a sign of mourning, or when danger threatened, or when the seer was preparing himself for a divine revelation. Occasional fasts were also instituted for the whole community, specially when the nation believed itself to be under Divine displeasure, or a great calamity befell the land, or pestilence raged, or drought set in.

The Jewish calendar contains comparatively few regular fast-days. Besides the day of Atonement, which is the only fast-day prescribed by the Mosaic Law, there were established after the captivity four regular fast-days in commemoration of the various sad days that had befallen the nation during the period. There were the fasts of the fourth month (May), of the fifth month (June) of the sixth month (July) and the tenth month (Tebet). According to some Rabbis of the Talmud these fasts were obligatory only when the nation was under oppression, but not when there was peace for Israel.

In addition to these there are other fasts which are observed

1. *Seerat-un-Nabi*, Vol. V, p. 212.

in memory of certain disasters that befell Israel. These are not regarded as obiigatory and have found little acceptance among the people. Their number, with a few changes, is twenty-five.

Besides the fixed fast-days, there are some other fasts which may be described as local or regional. These fasts, too, are related to one unfortunate occurrence or another in the history of Jews. Many fasts are divided among different classes, with each class observing the fast in memory of a certain calamity, or of a particular occasion of joy or sorrow. It is customary among many Jewish communities to fast on the eve of New Year's Day. The Synagogue is empowered to impose fasting in case of a misfortune befalling the people, such as pestilence, famine, or an evil decree enforced by the ruler of the day.

Private fasts have also been frequent among the Jews during the earliest times. One may take upon oneself to fast on certain days, either in memory of certain events in his own life, or in expiation of his sins, or in time of trouble to arouse God's mercy. The Rabbis, however, did not encourage such abstinence. They positively forbade it in the case of scholar who would be disturbed in his study, or of a teacher who would thereby be prevented form doing his work properly. Fasting was also done in consequence of seeing an evil dream. While in general no fast is permitted on Sabbaths or holidays the Talmud allows it to be undertaken on these days provided that it is complemented later by another fast.

The Jewish fasts begin at sunrise and end with the appearance of the first stars of the evening, except those of the Day of Atonement[1] and the ninth of Ab[2] which last "from eve to eve". There is no special ritual for the ordinary fast-days. The giving of charity on a fast-day, specially the distribution of food necessary for the evening meal, is encouraged.

1. This fast is observed on the tenth day of the seventh month (Tisri) of the Jewish calendar.
2 It is observed in commemoration of the first or second event of the burning down of the Tabernacle.

The first nine days of Ab, and with some Jewish communities, the period from the seventeenth of Tammuz to the tenth of Ab, are regarded as partial fasts in which the eating of meat and the drinking of wine alone are forbidden.[1]

Christianity

It is difficult to enter into a detailed discussion on the significance of fasting among the Christians. The common law of Christianity is lagging behind other religions in jurisprudence. It has, also, often been subjected to change and reform, under the stress of social and political impulsions, with the result that it can hardly be given the name of a Divine Law. We will, however, briefly trace the outline of the institution of fasting in Christianity which will also enable us to realise the extent of the alterations that have been taking place in it from time to time.

To quote from the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* :[2]

"Although he (Christ) himself fasted for 40 days before the beginning of his ministry, and probably as a devout Jew, kept the one fast-day that was obligatory at the time—the Day of Atonement—he left no regulations for fasting. He gave the principles and left his Church to make rules for carrying them out. No rules on the subject could claim to come directly from the Master himself..........The Jewish Christians, doubtlessly, continued to keep the Day of Atonement, and St. Luke mentions it as an epoch but the Gentiles were almost certainly not pressed to observe it.

"When we review the century and a half that followed the death of St. Paul we are at once struck by the want of regulations as to fasting. There was a general sense of the duty of fasting and frequent warnings against making it an external act.

"Irenaes say that there was great variety in its observance, some fasting for one day, others for two or for several days,

1. The above facts have been compiled from the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Vol., V, pp 347-9.
2. Vol., V, p. 765

and that this veriety was of long standing. It was a common custom in the Second Century, at least in some countries, to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, Pre-baptismal fast was observed by the candidate, the baptizer and others.

"From the 3rd Century onwards manuals of instruction and worship, now conveniently called 'Church Orders' became common, basing their injunctions in most cases on supposed Apostolic authority. Fasting, accordingly, was more regulated and the Orthodox became stricter than the Montanists. In the 4th Century we find only two days before Easter named as fasts in some authorities. The fast ends at midnight. Sick people who cannot fast on both days were allowed to fast on Saturday. There was also a diversity as to the time of ending the fast. In Rome they ended it at cockcrow, elsewhere at nightfall.

"A forty days' fast is not found till the 4th Century and made its way gradually. At Rome three successive weeks before Easter were kept except Saturdays and Sundays. In Illyria and Greece and Alexandria they fasted six weeks. The mode of fasting also varied ; some abstained from things that had life ; some ate fish only, others both fish and fowl ; some did not eat eggs and fruit, some ate dry bread only, some not even this.

"Since the Reformation the Church of England while fixing the fasting days, has made no rule how they are to be observed, leaving it to the individual conscience, but Acts of Parliament of Edward VI and James I and proclamations of Elizabeth vigorously enforced fasting, ordered abstinence from fresh-meat on fast days and gave the curious reason for the injunction that fish and shipping trade might be benefitted."

Disadvantages of Freedom of Choice in the Days and Method of Fasting

There were, thus, no fixed days of fasting nor detailed regulations concerning it in some of the earlier faiths. It was left to their followers to decide whether to abstain totally from food and drink or only partly. With most of the religions originating in India it is the same, so that while some of their adherants

simply refrain from eating meat on fast-days others avoid only such articles of food as are cooked on fire. There is also a section which takes only water with a little salt or lime-juice added to it, or something of the sort.[1]

These practices have, to a great extent, destroyed the spirit of fasting and impaired its efficacy. Since the choice was left to the individual who kept the fast and the determination of the days of fasting and the degree and duration of abstinence was made a matter of his preferment it paved the way for slackness and evasion. People began to take all kinds of liberties with fasting and it became very difficult to keep an eye on them for if anyone who was fasting was asked how it was that he was eating at day time he could very well say that his fast had ended. Similarly, if it was enquired why was he keeping fast at the time of breaking it he could reply that his fast had just begun.

The ancient religious communities were deprived of the moral and spiritual advantages of fasting due to this drawback. After their experience, the wisdom of fixing the days and time-schedule of fasting and framing elaborate rules for it becomes apparent. As Shah Waliullah writes :

"If the right to exercise one's own judgement in fasting is conceded it will open the door of evasion, the path of sanctioning what is allowed and forbidding what is prohibited will be obstructed and this foremost event of obeisance in Islam will fall into negligence."

With regard to the prescribing of the period of fasting he remarks, "It was also necessary to determine its period and duration so that no room was left for excess or slackness. But for it, some people would have observed so little of fasting that it would have been fruitless while others would have carried it so far as to inflict upon themselves excessive hardship. In truth, fasting is a remedy to counteract the effects of the poison of sensuality and, therefore, it is essential that it should be

1. The fasts observed by Gandhiji and his followers belong to the same category.

administered in the right quantity."[1]

Total Abstinence or Partial ?

Drawing a comparison between the two categories of fasting (one in which complete abstinence is observed from all the things that are inimical to fas'ing and the other in which only partial abstinence is practised) Shah Waliullah shows his preference for the former and explains its superiority in the following words :

"There are two ways of reduction in diet. One is to eat sparingly and the other is to observe such long interval between meals that the object of curtailment is gained. In the *Shariat* the latter course has been prescribed because it induces an adequate appreciation of the torments of hunger and thirst and strikes at the root of the carnal appetites, a definite reduction in whose force and intensity is noticed. On the contrary, in the former case, these results are not obtained owing to the continuity of meals. Besides, it is not possible to lay down a general rule for reduction as the circumstances differ from one individual to another. A person takes half a seer of food while for the other only a quarter of a seer suffices. Thus, if a general limit is laid down for everyone, one will profit by it and the other will suffer."

Shah Waliullah goes on to observe that moderation should be the rule in the determination of the hours of fasting. "It, again, was desirable," says he, "that the hours of fasting were not so long as to entail unbearable hardship as, for instance, three days and three nights. Apart from being opposed to the spirit of the *Shariat*, it would also have generally been impracticable.'[2]

Continuous Fasting-Days or Periodic ?

A common practice among the ancient religions was that

1. *Hujjat*, Vol. II, p. 37
2. *Hujjat*, p. 31

fasting was observed at intervals. Different days of the year were set aside for it and the gap between them was so long that the effectiveness of the act was lost. The period of fasting would end before one was morally, mentally and spiritually brought into accord with it. In the words of Hazrat Shah Waliullah. "It was necessary that the opportunity to abjure food and drink occured repeatedly and in succession in order that it could serve the purpose of an exercise in submission. To go without food only once (however hard it was) would avail nothing."[1]

Viewed against it, the Islamic *Saum* will seem to satisfy all the essential requisites of fasting and be capable of yielding the desired moral, social and spiritual benefits.

The Fast of 'Ashura

The fast of *'Ashura* was prescribed before the fasts of *Ramadhan*. The Jews observed it and so did the people of Arabia before the dawn of Islam.

It is related by Imam Bukhari on the authority of Ibn-i-Abbas that "when the Prophet came to Medina he found that the Jews observed the fast of *'Ashura*. He enquired about it from them and was told that it was the day on which God had delivered the Children of Israel from the enemy and Moses used to keep a fast on it as an expression of gratitude to the Almighty. The Prophet, thereupon, remarked that 'Moses has a greater claim upon me than upon you,' and he fasted on that day and instructed his followers to do the same."[2]

It is also mentioned in *Muslim*[3] that it is a most important day. On this day God had delivered Moses and his followers and drowned Pharaoh and his men. Moses fasted on it in thanks-giving. Imam Bukhari adds that it is related by Abu Bishr that "we also keep fast as a token of respect to Moses."

1. *Hujjat*, p. 37
2 *Bukhari : Kitab-us-Saum*
3. *Saheeh Muslim (Bab-ul-Saum, Yaum-i-'Ashura)*

But the celebrated mathematician, Abu Rehan Beruni has challenged the veracity of these reports on the basis of a comparative study of the Jewish and Arabian Calendars. He writes: "It is said that *'Ashur* is a Hebrew word which has become *'Ashura* in Arabic. It stands for the tenth day of the Jewish month of Tisri. The fast observed on this day is called Yom Kippur. It came to be incorporated in the Arab Calendar and the name was given to the tenth day of the first month of their year in the same way in waich it denoted the tenth day of the first month of the Jewish Calendar. It was instituted as a fast-day among the Muslims in the first year of Migration. Later, when fasting was enjoined in the month of *Ramadhan* it was dropped. A Tradition has it that when the Prophet came to Medina and saw that the Jews observed the fast of *'Ashura* he enquired about it and was told that it was the day on which God had drowned Pharaoh and his people and delivered Moses and his followers from them and Moses used to fast on it in thanksgiving. The Prophet, then, remarked that Moses had a greater claim upon him than upon them and he fasted on that day and instructed his followers to do the same. When the fasts of *Ramadhan* were prescribed, the Prophet neither enjoined the fast of *'Ashura* nor forbade it. But this report is fallacious and does not stand the test of enquiry. The first day of the month of Moharrum in the first year of *Hijrat* (Migration) was Friday which corresponds to the 16th of Tamuz, 933 (A.E.). As against it. the first day of that year among the Jews was Sunday, the 12th of Ailwal which corresponds to the 29th of Safar. Hence, the fast of *'Ashura* should have fallen on Tuesday, the 9th of Rabi-ul-Awwal, while the Migration had taken place during the first half of that month. The two dates, at any rate, do not correspond to each-other."

He adds: "The contention that on this day God had drowned the Pharaoh, too, is not supported by what is given in the Torah. The event of the drowning of the Pharaoh had taken place, according to Torah, on the 21st of Nisan which is the seventh day of the festival of Pass-over. The first Jewish fast of

Pass-over, after the arrival of the Prophet in Medina, occurred on Tuesday, the 22nd of Azhar, 933 which corresponds to the 17th of *Ramadhan.* This report also is, therefore, without a foundation."[1]

With due respect to the scholarship of Beruni, it is clear that he has built his thesis wholly on conjecture. He has, for instance, surmised that the talk reported by Ibn-i-Abbas and other Companions had taken place on the very first day of the Prophet's arrival in Medina as is evident from his observation that "when the sacred Prophet came to Medina or entered."

This misconception is due to the ignorance of the science of Traditions and of the holy Companion's mode of narration, innumberable instances of which are available in the Traditions. For example, it is related by Anas bin Malik that :

"When the Prophet came to Medina and (saw that) there were two days which the people of that place celebrated as festivals he enquired about their significance, (The people of Medina) told that, 'These were our days of fun and entertainment during the days of Paganism.' The Prophet, thereupon, observed, 'God has given you two better days in their place, 'Id-ul-Fitr and 'Id-ul-Adha'."

Now, will it be proper for anyone to infer from the above Tradition that the arrival of the Prophet in Medina took place on the same day which was the day of celebration in that town, and to proceed to question the veracity of the Tradition on the ground that it could not be chronometrically possible ? Similar errors of interpretation have been made in respect of other Traditions as well, like the one relating to pollination in date-palms.

Commenting on the argument advanced by Beruni, Allama Ibn-i-Hajr Asqallani says, ' He found it difficult to accept the Tradition due to the misunderstanding that when the Prophet arrived in Medina he saw the Jews in the state of keeping the fast of '*Ashura* while, in fact, it was in the month of Rabi-ul Awwal

1. *Al-Aasar-ul-Baqiya Anal Quroonul Khaliya*, p. 133

that the Prophet had come to Medina. The answer to it is that he has erred in the interpretation of the Tradition. What the Traditon actually means is that the Prophet came to know of the fast of '*Ashura* only when he had migrated to Medina and made his enquiry, for the first time, after he had reached there. In other words, the Prophet, when he came to Medina and stayed there till '*Ashura*, found that the Jews fasted on that day."[1]

There is left no chronological contradiction after Allama Asqallani's explanation, in the Tradition regarding the fast of '*Ashura*.

The second misconception under which Beruni labours is that the fast of '*Ashura* mentioned in the Tradition signifies the tenth day of the Jewish month of Tisri which is also known as Yom Kippur or the Fast of Atonement and is observed by them whith greater ceremony than any other fast. But there is nothing in the Tradition to warrant such a conclusion, and it is also not supported by the Torah because the Fast of Atonement was instituted in expiation of a mortal sin[2] and observed as a day of penance and mourning.

The Day of Atonement, which is the tenth day of the seventh month of Tisri, is referred to in these words in the Third Book of Moses called, Leviticus:

> "And this will be a statute for ever unto you; that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger who sojourneth among you: for on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord, It shall be a Sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever"[3]

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1. *Fath-ul-Bari*, Vol. IV, pp. 214-216
2. The allusion, perhaps, is to the worship of the calf.
3. Lev. 16: 29-31

At another place in the same Book, it is said that :

> "And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement : it shall be a holy convocation unto you ; and ye shall afflict your souls, and after an offering made by fire unto the Lord. And ye shall do no work in that same day ; for it is a day of atonement : to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God "[1]

Similarly, in the Book of Numbers, it is set forth.

> "And ye shall have on the tenth day of this seventh month a holy convocation ; and ye shall afflict your souls ; ye shall not do any work therein "[2]

On the other hand, it explicity occurs in the Traditions that the day of '*Ashura* (on which the Muslims are enjoined to fast) was a day of rejoicing among the Jews. As Imam Bukhari has related it on the authority of Abu Musa Ash'ari, the Jews regarded it to be a day of 'Id and it was on seeing it that the holy Prophet advised his Companions also to keep fast on it.[3]

In *Saheeh Muslim*, also, it is related from Qais bin Muslim that men of good-doing observed the fast of '*Ashura* and celebrated it as the day of 'Id, with their women wearing the best of clothes and ornaments. The Prophet, on seeing it, said to us, "You should also fast on this day"

It is, further, related by Koraib bin S'ad from Omar bin el-Khattab that, "on the Day of Judgement God will ask you only about two fasts, the fasts of *Ramadhan* and the fast of the day of adornment (i. e., '*Ashura*).[4]

In the light of the facts given above, it will be incorrect to say that '*Ashura* is the Day of Atonement. Were it so, it would have been a day of lamentation and mortification while '*Ashura* as mentioned in the Tradition, is a day of merriment and decoration.

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1. Lev. 23 : 26-28
2. Num. 29 : 7
3. *Kitab-us-Saum*, Vol. IV
4. *Kinz-el-'Amal*, Vol. IV, p. 34

The same fallacy is shared by a number of Western scholars as well. As for instance, Abraham Katish observes about the Day of Atonement in his book entitled, 'Judaism in Islam,' that "Mohammad, in the beginning, instituted it as a day of fasting for Muslims."

The assertion of the Jews themselves about *'Ashura* that it was the day on which God had delivered the Israelites from their enemies is enough to set at rest all doubts in this connection. In the Torah it has been repeatedly mentioned as Abib which later came to be known as Nisan. About Abib, we read in *Dairatul M'aarif* that "it is a Hebraic word which means 'green'. It is the name of the first month of the Hebraic year. This name was given to it by Moses and it corresponds nearly to the month of April. When the Jews were exiled in Babylon they changed its name to Nisan meaning 'the month of flowers.' Their 'Id-ul-Fateer (Pass-over) is also held in the middle of it."[1]

Beruni, also, has admitted that it is wrong to suppose that the Day of Atonement signified the day on which God had drowned Pharaoh and his men. He says, "Their contention that on this day God had drowned Pharaoh is opposed to what is stated in the Torah because the event of drowning took place on the 21st of Nisan which is the seventh day of *Ayam-ul-Fateer* (Pass-over). It is set forth in Torah (Ex. 12 : 18) that 'In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day of the month at even'."

We, therefore, conclude that *'Ashura*, which is mentioned in the Traditions related by Ibn-i-Abbas and others and on which day the Muslims have been exhorted to fast and was included among the near-obligatory duties in Islam before the fasts of *Ramadhan* were prescribed, corresponds, in the largest measure, to the day which falls in the middle of the Hebraic month of

1. Bustani says that according to the current Calendar of the Israelites the first month of their year is called Tisri, and, in this way, Abib turns out to be the seventh month.

Abib, whose name was changed to Nisan by the Jews during the period of their exile in Babylon and was celebrated by them as an 'Id and an event of fasting and entertainment. It was on this day that the Israelites had come out of Egypt and the Pharaoh was drowned.[1] In the second Book of Moses it is related that: "And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place; there shall no leavend bread be eaten. This day came ye out in the month of Abib." (Ex. 13 : 3-4)

In sum, the general consensus among Muslim theologians and religious scholars is that '*Ashura* fell on the tenth day of the Arab month of Moharrum in tne second year of Migration and that it was later annulled by *Ramadhan.*

Besides, any attempt to make the Lunar Arabian Calendar correspond to the Solar Jewish Calendar can, at the best, be only hypothetical. The ancient custom of *Nasi* has also taken a hand in adding to the confusion. This practice was quite common in Arabia, both before and after the advent of Islam, till it was pro-hibited by the Quranic injunction which reads: *Postponement of a month is only an excess of disbelief, whereby those who disbelieve are misled.* (ix : 37)

On the cccasion of the Farewell *Haj*, the holy Prophet had declared, "Time has returned to the original state that obtained when the heavens and the earth were created". These words were of Divine Inspiration for the Arab arrangement of time into days, weeks, months and years had been changed so frequenty that it could not be relied upon nor restored to its original form through mathematical calculation. It is, therefore,

1. To some people it may seem hard to imagine that fasting could be associated with 'Id. But it is due to the mistake we often make of confusing the fasts of the Jews and Christians with Islamic fasting. Anyway about the tenth day of the seventh month it is definitely stated in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* that it is the day of fasting and celebration ('Id).

incorrect to question the authenticity of successive Traditions merely on the basis of an erratic and inconstant Calendar.[1]

It is also possible that the Jews of Medina were different from the other Jewish communities where the fast of *'Ashura* was concerned and observed it with greater enthusiasm and regularity, and, in this respect, they were similar to the Arabs who, seeing that so many important events had taken place on that day, fasted on it out of reverence.

It is related by Hazrat Ayesha that, "the Quraish fasted on the day of *'Ashura* during the period of Ignorance and the sacred Prophet also kept it."[2] Further, the fast-days among the Jews living in different countries differed from one another. We have seen how in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* it is indicated that apart from the fixed fast-days many fasts of a local or national character had become established among the Jews from the early days which varied from place to place. Private fasts were also common among the Jews and one could take it upon oneself to fast on certain days in memory of certain events or at the time of adversity to arouse God's mercy. In these circumstances, it is quite possible that the fast of *'Ashura*, on the tenth day of the first month of the Arab Calendar, was peculiar to the Jews living in Arabia alone. Perhaps, it is for this reason that the Talmud and the Jewish Calendar are silent on this score. Some historians have treated it as identical to the Fast of Atonement which all the Jews, wherever they be, consider obligatory. Thus, those who subscribe to this view are inclined to doubt the veracity of the afore-mentioned Traditions. But their judgement is influenced by the ignorance of the habits and practices of the Jews living in various parts of the world, specially in Arabia where they had been settled for generations as a distinct community, possessing their own beliefs and customs and receiving local impressions in the historical course of things.

1. Meaning the postponement of a month by one or two months, according to need or convenience, which was common among the Polytheists of Arabia.
2. *Muslim*

The Injunction of Fasting and Relevant Verses

Out of these sublime considerations and the realisation of the lofty aims, spiritual as well as temporal, which are beyond human comprehension, as also for the emancipation of the soul from the domination of fleshly appetites and the fulfilment of the Divine mission of Vicegerency, for which the qualities of moderation, temperateness and fortitude are indispensable, God has enjoined fasting upon Muslims. But it was done after Migration when the clouds of gloom had lifted and the period of poverty and privation ended and the Muslims were leading a life of peace and contentment probably because if the command of fasting had been sent down during the days of distress it could be interpreted as an act of desperation and people would have thought that it was related to conditions of oppression and despondency and was, therefore, binding only on the poor and while the privileged and well-to-do members of the community were excluded from its application.

Besides, the verse enjoining fasting upon Muslims was revealed when they had attained firmness and maturity of faith and *Salat* had become an integral part of their being and they had arrived at a stage when it was easy for them to submit willingly to what they were commanded to by God and His Apostle.

To quote from Allama Ibn-i-Qaiyyim:

"Since to liberate man from the clutches of sensuality is a most difficult task and it takes a lot of time the command of the obligatoriness of fasting was not revealed till such time after Migration as it had become clear that the creed of Monotheism and the duty of *Salat* had sunk deep into them and they had become thoroughly oriented to the injunctions of the Quran. The command of fasting, was, thus, revealed in the second year of Migration and the holy Prophet kept the fasts of *Ramadhan* for nine years before he departed from the world."[1]

The Quranic verses containing the command of fasting are

1. *Zaad-el-Ma'ad*, Vol. I., p. 152

as follows :

> O ye who believe ! Fasting is prescribed to you, as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may ward off evil ; Fast a certain number of days ; and for him who is sick among you, or on a journey, the same number of other days ; and for those who can do it (with hardship)[1] is a

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1. The word *Taqat*, meaning 'strength' (or *Qudrat*, meaning 'power') is used in many senses in the Arabic language. In the first grade it is used to convey the meaning of *Istita'at* (capacity), and, in the last grade, of *Itaqat* (i. e., to endure with difficulty). In the latter sense, it will be used to convey the impression that such-and-such a task was so difficult that it broke one's back or left him thoroughly exhausted. Thus, if a person were to say that he could lift a heavy stone or observe fasting continuously or offer *Salat* throughout the night he will u e the word *Utiq* for it. Now, the phrase *Alal-lazina Utiqoonahu*, occurring in above verse, denotes (*those who can fast with serious difficulty or hardship*, i. e., such aged men and women or sick persons who can venture to fast only at the risk of their life or health.

Ibn-i-Abbas had drawn the same inference. It is related from him in *Bukhari, Abu Da'ud* and *Sehah* that the verse is intended for very old men and women. It is stated in *Bukhari*, in relation to Ibn-i-Abbas, that he recited the verse, *Alal-Lazina Utiqoonahu* and said that it denoted such people who could fast only with severe hardship and applied to men and women who were very old and feeble. In the light of this observation it is not at all necessary to treat the verse as void, as many people do, or seek an ingenious interpretation of it. The same view has also been expressed by Hazrat Ali, Hazrat Abu Huraira and many other Companions.

The Command of *Kutiba Alaikumus Siyamu* (Fasting is prescribed to you) is, therefore, addressed to three kinds of people. Firstly, those who are healthy and not on a journey : for them fasting is compulsory ; secondly, those who are sick or on a journey : for them it is permissible not to keep fast but they must make amends for it by fasting, at some other time, for as many days as they had omitted ; and, thirdly, those who are too old and feeble (or afflicted with an incurable disease) to bear the hardship of fasting, but they will have to feed a poor and needy Muslim in lieu of every fasting day. The same is the case with a woman in the family way or one who is nursing a baby.

For a more detailed discussion the readers are referred to the original Arabic Edition of the book or its Urdu translation.

ransom; the feeding of a man in need—But who doeth good willingly; it is better for him; and that ye fast is better for you if ye did but know—The month of *Ramadhan* in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the Criterion (of right and wrong). And whosoever of you is present (i. e.. alive in the month of *Ramadhan*), let him fast the month, and whosoever of you is sick or on a journey, let him fast the same number of other days. Allah desireth for you ease; He desireth not hardship for you; and He desireth that ye should complete the prescribed period, and that ye should magnify Allah for having guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful. (—ii : 183-185)

The above verses, through which fasting was enjoined for the first time, do not belong to the category of prosaic and unimaginative laws that are enacted on the strength of the social and political relationship between the State and the individual. These verses appeal immediately to one's faith, conscience and intellect and show a due regard to all the aspects of the human personality. They not only enforce a commandment but also prepare the ground for its willing acceptance and, in all respects, bear an eloquent testimony to the marvellousness of the Quranic method of teaching, exhortation and legislation.

Falsehood cannot come at it (the Quran) from before it or behind it. It is a revelation from the Wise, the Owner of Praise. (—xli ; 42)

To begin with, God addresses those to whom fasting is prescribed in these words : *O ye who believe* ! The believers are, thus, made ready beforehand for the fulfilment of the command that is going to be sent down, however hard it may be, for it is a primary requirement of faith that once a person has affirmed his belief in God as the Lord and Creator, the Worshipped One and the Arbiter of what is lawful and what is forbidden, and surrendered the control and management of his affairs to Him, he should, faithfully and without reluctance, submit to all the laws and regulations Allah may be pleased to proclaim.

> The saying of (all true) believers when they appeal unto Allah and His Messenger to judge between them is only that they say: We hear and We obey. And such are the successful.
>
> (—xxiv : 51)
>
> And it becometh not a believing man and a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided an affair for them, that they should (after that) claim any say in their affair.
>
> (—xxxiii : 36)
>
> O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and the Messenger when he (the Messenger) calleth you to that which quickeneth you. (—viii : 24)

The Quran, then, declares that fasting is enjoined upon Muslims and adds that it is not a unique event in the history of religions. It was the same with the adherents of revealed faiths and possessors of the Divine Law before them. In this way, it lessens the degree of depression which is usually caused by the thought of isolation. If a person knows that what he is called upon to do is nothing new and so many peoples and communities have done it already he takes heart from it and the task begins to look easier.

The believers, again, are assured that the purpose of fasting is not to put them to unnecessary hardship but it is for their own betterment and purification. It is a moral discipline which makes a man perfect. After going through it he begins to rule over his evil desires instead of being ruled by them. If a believer can forgo clean and legitimate things, including fresh water and wholesome food, at the behest of God, will he not do his best to keep away from what is impure and forbidden? This is precisely what the verse, *that ye may ward off evil* signifies.

Later, the believers are told not to consider the period of one month excessive since it is only a matter of a limited number of days which follow one another in regular order and come to an end quickly. Moreover, what relation does a month (in which fasting is done only during the day) bear to the days and

nights of a whole year that are spent in ease and enjoyment? The old, the sick, the travellers and other persons specially circumstanced are further exempted from fasting.

And, finally, while dwelling upon the significance of the month in which fasting is prescribed it is emphasised that it is the month in which the holy Quran was revealed and a new message of faith and hope was vouchsafed to mankind. What could be more fitting and beneficial for a Muslim than that he quickened himself with new life through fasting and prayer during the blessed month of *Ramadhan?*

This, in brief, is the Islamic fast or spiritual fare which is endued with every kind of virtue and free from any hardship or severity that may be beyond the endurance of man.

> Allah desireth for you ease: He desireth not hardship for you; and He desireth that ye should complete the prescribed period (of fasting), and that ye should glorify Allah for having guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful.
>
> (—ii : 185)

Characteristics

The plan of fasting presented by Islam is perfect both as regards objectives and regulations. It holds the greatest assurance of goodness and, in it, the glory and excellence of Divine Wisdom is also supremely manifest. As the Quran says:

> Should He not know what He created? And He is the Subtile, the Aware.
>
> (—lxvii : 14)

God has chosen the month of *Ramadhan* (in which the holy Quran was revealed) for fasting. In it a Muslim is enjoined to go without food and drink during the day but not at night. This method of fasting was prevalent among the Arabs of those days and in the Islamic *Shariat*, too, it is the established rule and confirmed practice.

Writes Hazrat Shah Waliullah[1]: "In fasting the day

1. *Hujjat*, Vol. II, p. 37

extends from sunrise to sunset because it was in this way that days were measured in Arabia and the fast of '*Ashura* was kept during the same hours. The month begins with the appearance of the new moon for the Arab Calendar is not based on the Solar months."

Fasting and the Month of Ramadhan

God has prescribed fasting in the month of *Ramadhan* and declared the two to be inseparable. The joining together of these two blessings is an act of great significance primarily because it was in this month that the Quran was revealed and the joyful tidings of a new dawn were given to the ailing humanity. It was, therefore, appropriate that just as the rising of the sun was linked with the commencement of the fast, the month of *Ramadhan*, too, in which the whole of mankind emerged from a long spell of darkness, should be marked out for fasting, more so when it was also superior to all other months in effulgence and propitiousness deserved that its days should be adorned with fasting and nights with prayer.[1]

A most intimate association exists between fasting and the Quran. The holy Prophet used to pay the greatest attention to the recitation of the Quran in *Ramadhan*. It is related by Ibn-i-Abbas that the Prophet was the most generous of all men but in the month of *Ramadhan*, when the Archangel Gabriel used to come to him, his generosity knew no bounds. In *Ramadhan* Gabriel came to him every night and joined in the recitation of the Quran. During those days the Prophet appeared to be faster than the wind in acts of charity and benevolence.[2]

Hazrat Majaddid Alf-Thani[3] says in one of his letters that

1. Hazrat Shah Waliullah remarks that when a month was, after all, to be set aside for fasting no other month could make a better choice than *Ramadhan* in which the Quran was revealed and the foundations of the Muslim *Millat* were made secure, and the possibility of the occurence of the Night of Power is also the greatest in it (*Hujjat*, Vol. II, p. 37).
2. *Bukhari and Muslim*
3. Sheikh Ahmad Farooqi of Sarhind, India (971—1034 A. H.)

"this month bears a special relationship with the Quran and, hence, it was in it that the Quran was revealed. It is endued with every kind of virtue and blessedness. The blessings which fall to the lot of a man in a whole year are as insignificant when compared to the blessings of *Ramadhan* as a drop of water is before an ocean. The attainment of inner peace and tranquility in this month suffices for the entire year while mental disquite and uneasiness during it takes the whole of the year in its grasp. Blessed, indeed, are they with whom this auspicious month departs in good pleasure while those who deprive themselves of goodness and felicity by displeasing it are, for sure, doomed and accursed."[1]

The great Majaddid, in another Letter, writes: "If a person is fortunate enough to perform a good deed in the month of *Ramadhan* the blessedness of it will not depart from him for the whole year and if this month is spent in distress and frustration the danger is that the whole of the year will pass for him in the same way."[2]

Season of Prayer, Festival of Virtue

All these beneficial qualities have combined to make *Ramadhan* a season of prayer and good-doing in which all Muslims, to whatever group, class, race or country they belong, join and fraternise with each other. The month of fasting comes to every town and village at the same time and sheds its lustre on the cottage and the castle alike. It makes no distinction and allows for no discrimination. There is, therefore, no reason for anyone to be proud or arrogant about it nor any room for a dispute or controversy to arise over the selection of the days of fasting. Its glory and radiance is spread all over the Muslim World for anyone to see. When the month of *Ramadhan* comes it appears that a huge canopy of effulgence and serenity has been stretched over the lands of Islam. Even the indolent

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1. *Muktubat-i-Imam-i-Rabbani*, Vol. I, p, 8
2. *Ibid*, p. 45

and the faint-hearted feel themselves compelled to fast for fear of being isolated from the general body of Muslims, and, if for some reason, they do not keep fast they refrain from eating in public, excepting, of course, the handful of perverts and renegades for whom there is no feeling of shame in the defiance or violation of a Divine injunction, and the sick and the travellers who are exempted from fasting by the *Shariat*. It is a mass movement, a collective event, which is thoroughly compulsive in nature. The spiritual response it evokes among the Muslims is so spontaneous that fasting becomes easy for them and their hearts melt and they are drawn inwardly to various acts of prayer, adoration, compassion and kindliness.

Commenting on the Tradition that "when the month of *Ramadhan* comes the gates of Heaven are thrown open", Hazrat Shah Waliullah observes :

"Since fasting is in the nature of a popular event it is protected against encroachment by ritualism. For the community which observes it faithfully the Devil is put behind the bars, the gates of Heaven are thrown open and the gate of Hell are shut.

"................The accord and convergence of Muslims on a particular thing, at a particular time, with all the people seeing one another, lends encouragement to them and makes fasting easy.

"......Likewise, this concord and unity of purpose is the cause of the descent of celestial blessings on both the high and the low and it is quite likely that when the rays of Divine Splendour fall on His venerable slaves they spread also to those that are inferior to them (in religion) and their prayers and invocations cover such of His servants as well who are lagging behind."[1]

Virtues

Life is another name for the struggle between the urges of

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1. *Hujjat*, Vol. II, p. 37

the self and the dictates of the mind. But in this struggle it is not the carnal desires that always triumph as some people imagine. Such a notion does little credit to those who expound it for it betrays a melancholic mistrust of human nature and a cynical denial of truth.

What lends dynamism to life and keeps the world humming with activity is the incentive of profit. It is this inducement which awakens the farmer in the biting cold of a wintry morning and sends him off to the field before the day has dawned or persuades the business-man to give up the comforts of home for the sake of trade or inspires the soldier to lay down his life for the glory of the motherland. The whole mechanism of life and active effort revolves around it. The assurance of gain, or the expectation of it in the future, is the rallying point in the struggle for existence.

There is, however, another assurance or expectation the impelling force of which is much greater. It is of the virtues and benefits the glad tidings of which were brought by the Divine Apostles and are contained in the sacred Scriptures. We can describe it as the incentive of Divine good pleasure and Requital of one's deeds in both the worlds.

Everyone knows that fasting is beneficial for health and from the medical point of view it is advisable that we fasted occassionally. But if a survey was undertaken of those who fasted solely for reasons of physical well-being, even during the cold weather when it is easier to abstain from food, wholly or partly, their number would not be much although such a fast is far less difficult than what is prescribed in Islam.

On the contrary, if a count is made of the people who observe fasting as a religious obligation and in fulfilment of the covenant of the Lord it will run into millions in spite of the ascendancy of materialism and the decline of moral and religious values in the modern world. These are the people who brave the intense heat of the summer and the sharp pangs of hunger and thirst and observe fasting and, also, devote their nights to prayer simply in response to the spiritual urge and in the hope

of the reward of the Hereafter. This is so because in the sight of men of faith spiritual benefits and advantages (the knowledge of which has come down to us through the sacred Apostles) are far more valuable than the medical or economic gains the physicians or economists advocate.

It is related that the Prophet once said, "There is a fixed principle for rewarding all the good deeds of men, and every good deed will be rewarded according to it. But the fast is an exception. The standing command of the Lord is that since a man forgoes food and drink and subdues his passions solely for His sake, He will recompense him directly for it."[1]

One more Tradition of the Prophet reads: "There are two moments of special joy for a person who fasts: one is when he breaks the fast, and this he experiences in his earthly existence, and the other will come in the Hereafter when he will be presented before the Lord."[2]

To take two other Traditions: "The bad odour emanating from the mouth of a person who is fasting (which is generally produced due to an empty stomach) is more pleasant in the judgement of God than the sweet smell of musk."[3] And: "There is a gate of Paradise which is known as *Rayyan*. Only those who fast will be permitted to enter through it. One who will enter through it shall never be thirsty."[4]

Safeguarding the Spirit of Fasting

Owing to the institutional nature of fasting and its widespread popularity it was quite possible that it degenerated into a lifeless ritual with people taking to fasting out of habit or for fear of social censure. It was not inconceivable that the Muslims lost sight of its intrinsic significance and began to fast only because of material benefits or medical advantages. The

1. *Sihah-i-Sitta*
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Sheikhain*
4. *Sheikhain*

holy Prophet had foreseen the possibility and to safeguard against it he had made it known at the very first step, that only that fast was acceptable to God which was observed in the spirit of faith and trust in Divine Recompense. Thus, a Tradition of his says, "He who fasted with *Iman* (faith) and *Ihtisab* (trust in Divine Recompense) all his previous sins will be forgiven."[1]

For those who are not cognizant of the weaknesses of the human nature it may be hard to appreciate the relevance of this stipulation. They may argue that since it was only the Muslims who observed fasting and they did it wholly for propitiating God and earning His reward the requirement of faith and trust was unnecessary. But if one cared to enquire into the peculiar makeup of human personality and the working of social and moral incentives one was bound to submit to the wisdom of the far-reaching provision and to bow down before the depth and profundity of knowledge which has its roots not in human perception but Divine revelation. *Nor doth he speak of his own desire. It is naught save an inspiration that is inspired.* (—liii : 3-4)

In a Prophet's Tradition the state of *Iman* and *Ihtisab* has been defined as one in which a person performs good and virtuous deeds in the hope of Divine Recompense and with faith in the promise of Divine good pleasure and forgiveness.

It is related by 'Abdullah bin Amr bin el-A'as that the Prophet once said, "There are forty deeds among which the best is the gift of a goat. If any of these is performed in the hope of Divine Recompense and with faith in the reward promised on it, God will allow such a person to enter Paradise."[2]

The Islamic *Shariat* does not rest content at prescribing the outward form and ceremony of fasting but also lays stress on its inner content and significance. It prohibits not only food and drink and sexual gratification during a fast but everything that is detrimental to its basic purpose and objective. It has encompassed fasting, on all sides, with piety, reverence and

1. *Sheikhain.*
2. *Bukhari.*

cleanliness. The Prophet has said, "When any of you keeps a fast he should not utter a filthy or indecent word or engage in a noisy scene, and were anyone to quarrel with him and call him names he should simply say, 'I am keeping fast'."[1] On another occasion he said, "God has no need for him to go without food and drink who cannot shun evil and falsehood even during a fast."[2]

A fast which is devoid of the spirit of piety and purity is like a body without a soul. The Prophet, again, is reported to have said, "Many are there among you who fast and yet gain nothing from it except hunger and thirst, and many are there who pray (throughout the night) and yet gain nothing from it except wakefulness."[3]

It is related by Hazrat Abu Huraira that the holy Prophet once said, "Fasting is a shield until it is ripped."[4]

Fasting in Islam does not merely denote certain negative acts like the shunning of food and drink and abstaining from falsehood and backbiting and from wrangling and uttering a foul or profane word but it also includes a number of positive deeds, such as, prayer, *Zikr* compassion and charity. The Prophet has said, "If in it (i.e., month of *Ramadhan*) a person will seek the propitiation of God by doing anything it will be treated as equal (in recompense) to the fulfilment of an obligatory duty in the other days of the year and if he will fulfil an obligatory duty in it, it will be treated as equal (in recompense) to the fulfilment of seventy obligatory duties in the other days of the year. It is the month of patient perseverence and the reward on patient perseverence is Paradise, and it is the month of Compassion."[5]

It is related by Zaid bin Khalid Aljohni that the Prophet once remarked, "He who will invite a person who is fasting to

1. *Bukhari.*
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. In *Nissai* it is added the Prophet was, thereupon, asked, "Until it is ripped with what ?" "With falsehood and backbiting", he replied.
5. *Baihaqi*

break the fast with him will get the same reward as the one who was fasting and there will be no reduction in the reward of the latter either."[1]

God has also blessed the Muslim *Millet* with the prudence and anxiety to preserve the tradition of *Taraweeh.*[2] The celebration of the prayer-service of *Taraweeh* dates back from the time of the holy Prophet but he had abandoned it after offering it up for three days lest it was made compulsory for Muslims and became a burden to them. It is related by Ibn-i-Shahab that he had heard it from Urwah who, in his turn, had heard it from Hazrat Ayesha, that "once the Prophet went out in the night (after the *Isha* prayers) and offered *Salat* in the mosque and some other persons also joined him in it. When the morning came people began to talk about it and a crowd collected. On the next day when he offerd the prayer they all offered it up with him and it was again talked about on the following morning. On the third night the number of the devotees was even greater. The Prophet came out and offered up the prayer with them. When the fourth night came the rush was so great that the whole of the mosque was filed untiil the Prophet came for the *Fajir* prayers. After he had completed it he turned towards the people and said, 'I was not unaware of your presence (in the mosque last night) but I feared that the service (*Taraweeh*) might be made obligatory and then you got tired of it.' Then the death occurred of the Prophet and the position remaind the same."[3]

After the passing away of the Prophet the holy Companions conducted themselves similary and so enthusiastically did the Muslims everywhere keep up the tradition of *Taraweeh* that it came to be regarded as a sign and symbol of *Ahl-i-Sunnat*[4] and a mark of devoutness. In addition, the institution of *Taraweeh* has proved extremely helpful in the learning of the whole of the Quran by heart. More and more people were drawn to it, and

1. *Tirmidhi*
2. Extra prayers offered in the night during the fast of *Ramadhan.*
3. *Bukhari*
4. Followers of the traditional as well as the written law of Islam.

the Quran came to be preserved in many a breast.[1] Another priceless advantage is that a large section of the community is thus enabled to devote itself to nightly worship in the blessed month of *Ramadhan*. *Ramadhan* is a festival of worship, a season of *Tilawat*[2] and springtime for the devout. The religious fervour of the Muslim *Millet*, its genuine, solid and unshakeable attachment to faith and enthusiasm for worship acquires a new warmth and sublimity in it.[3] During this hallowed month the

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1. In this respect there is a special favour of the Lord on some countries though they are far removed from the cradle of Islam. In India and Pakistan, for instance, there is witnessed a unique enthusiasm for *Taraweeh* and the completion of one recitation of the Quran, from the beginning to the end, in *Ramadhan*. Here the arrangement for *Taraweeh* is made even in smaller mosques of various localities where at least one recitation of the whole of the Quran is completed while in the bigger ones two or three (or even more) recitations are done. The preservation of this tradition has definitely led to a marked increase in the number of *Huffaz* (plural of *Hafiz*, meaning one who has the whole of the Quran by heart). With many people it has become a regular practice to keep up the recitation of the Quran from memory throughout the year so that they can lead the *Taraweeh* prayer-service correctly in *Ramadhan* and *Huffaz* of such a high standard have been produced that they are the marvel of world.
2. Meaning the recitation of Quran.
3. The eagerness to devote as much time as possible to prayer, *Zikr* and *Tilawat* and to outdo others in virtue and righteousness during the month of *Ramadhan* has been a standing tradition among the Muslims and the blessed servants of Allah have attained unbelievable degrees of excellence in it. So marvellous are their achievements that they can be explained only as the fruits of the powerful spirituality and deep-heartedness of men of faith. We, ourselves have seen spiritual mentors and theological scholars who used to complete the recitation of the whole of the Quran every day in the month of *Ramadhan* and spend almost the whole of their nights in prayer and meditation. Their meals were so frugal that one wondered how could they exert themselves to such lengths. They regarded every moment of the blessed month to be precious and did not want to waste it. On seeing them one could obtain an idea of the importance of *Ramadhan* and of the worth and significance of life, and it became apparent that the accounts of the superhuman deeds of devout-

Continued on next page

urge for excelling others in prayerfulness, piety, warmheartedness charity, good-doing and repentance is at the peak among the Muslims.

Shortcomings of Muslims

With all this, the Muslims have often failed to do justice to the true aims and objects of fasting. Hence, its assured or expected benefits have not fully come their way. Over-indulgence in food and drink at *Iftar*,[1] for example, was carried to such a length that the very purpose of fasting and its purificatory influence were impaired. Imam Ghazali, while lamenting over it, writes :[2]

"At the time of *Iftar* even lawful food should be partaken of with moderation and over-eating strictly avoided because among the things that are to be filled nothing is more repugnant to God than an over-filled stomach. If a fasting person were to try to make amends for the day-long starvation at *Iftar* and eat at one meal-time what he would have eaten throughout the day how can the fast be efficacious in overcoming the enemy of God and subduing the desires that lead to evil ? If the stomach is denied all food and drink from sunrise to sunset, and after putting hunger and other cravings of the flesh to the severest of trials, a sumptuous meal is taken in the evening the sensual appetites will become sharper instead of losing their intensity. What is more, the evil propensities that were hitherto dormant might become active. The fundamental purpose of fasting is to subdue the desires and passions that are played upon by the Devil and used by him as his tools, and this can be achieved only by cutting down on food, i. e., by eating only as much in the evening as is done on normal days. If a person ate at one meal-time what he

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ness, piety and highmindedness performed by the forerunners and pious precursors, one read about in history books, were not at all false or exaggerated.

1. Breaking the fast.
2. *Ihya-ul-Uloom*, p. 211.

used to eat throughout the day he will gain nothing from fasting.

"Furthermore, not to sleep in excess during the day is also a part of the discipline of fasting so that one may experience the pangs of hunger and thirst and feel the effects of physical debility ahd enervation and the purification of the heart, thus, took place.

"It is, in the same way, desirable to eat lightly at night so that one can get up easily for *Tahajjud* and other supererogatory prayers and the Devil is kept at an arm's length, and, through purification of the heart, one is enabled to obtain a glimpse of the Celestial World."

Protection against Extremism

The institution of fasting could easily be carried to the extreme. A popular misconception about it was that its real purpose was to annihilate the desires of the flesh altogether and provide an opportunity for self-mortification in the last degree. It was supposed that the more one practised abstinence, abjured the comforts of the world and did hunger and thirst and gave the proof of fortitude and endurance the more would one become the favourite of the Lord and join the ranks of the pious and the persevering.

This fallacious belief had given rise to such an exaggerated notion of worship, specially fasting, among the religiously and ascetically inclined sections of the ancient faiths that they prolonged the period of abstention from food and drink by delaying inordinately the time of *Iftar* and eating the *Saheri*[1] verly early, or not at all. They regarded things like *Iftari*[2] and *Saheri* as weaknesses to succumb to which was disgraceful for those who aspired for greater heights in religion and spirituality. Sometimes these people fasted continuously for days and did not eat or

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1. The light meal which Muslims make, a little before dawn, during the month of *Ramadhan*.
2. The meal taken for fast-breaking at sunset.

drink anything in the night as well. Many over-enthusiastic Muslims and those among them that were given to making innovations in faith also took guidance from their example. But such extremism is patently un-Islamic. It amounts to distortion of religion, to making alterations in it out of one's own impulse or choice, and pursuing the path of penance and flagellation. It paves the way for mischief and constitutes an open challenge to the Divine proclamation which says :

> Allah desireth ease for you ; He desireth not hardship for you. (—ii : 185)
>
> And He hath not laid upon you any hardship. (—xxii : 78)

The holy Prophet has said : "This faith is easy and whosoever shows arrogance in it (i. e., takes it to extremes to show off his strength and power of endurance) will, ultimately, have to accept defeat. So, follow the path of rectitude and moderation".[1]

The Islamic *Shariat* comes down heavily on extremism in fasting. It advocates positively the practice of *Saheri* before the commencement of the fast. The Prophet, himself, has declared it to be a *Sunnat* for Muslims. It is related by Anas bin Malik that he once said, "Eat *Saheri* for there is propitiousness in it."[2]

Again, it is related by Amr bin el-A'as that the Prophet once said, "What distinguishes our fasting from the fasting of the other people of the Book is *Saheri.*"[3]

The Prophet has, also, forbidden the delaying of *Iftar* and condemned it as the way of extremists among the people of the Book and a sign of mischief and perversion. It is related by Suhail bin S'ad that he said, "So long as people are prompt in *Iftar* they will remain on the side of virtue."[4] A similar Tradition related by Hazrat Abu Huraira says, "As long as people observe promptitude in *Iftar* the faith will be in the ascendance

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1. *Bukhari*
2. *Tirmidhi.*
3. *Muslim.*
4. *Tirmidhi*

because the Jews and the Christians make delay in it."[1]

Likewise, it is preferable to make a late *Saheri* and such also was the conduct of the holy Companions. It is related by Zaid bin Thabit that "we took the *Saheri* with the Prophet and, then, stood up for *Salat*." On being enquired about the time intervening between the two acts he replied that it was equal to what was needed for the recitation of fifty verses of the Quran.[2] We, further, learn from Ibn-i-Omar that there were two *Muezzins*[3] of the sacred Prophet, Bilal and Ibn-i-Ummi-Muktoom. The Prophet once said, "The *Azan* of Bilal is the sign of night. Eat in it till Ibn-Mukhtoom gives the *Azan*." The gap between the two *Azans*, according to him, was only this much that as the former came down from the platform the latter climbed to it.[4]

In the words of Hazrat Shah Waliullah,[5] "One of the main objects of fasting is to discourage unnecesary speculation and hairsplitting and to block the path of extremism. This mode of worship was known to and practised by the Jews and Christians as well as the devout Arabs, and, thinking that the institution of fasting was rooted in severe self-denial and asceticism, they indulged in excessive abstinence and invented many devices of mortification on their own. This is where distortion of faith sets in which is sometimes of a quantitative and sometimes of a qualitative nature. In the sphere of quantity, the discouragement of extremism can be imagined from the fact that the Prophet forbade the Muslims against fasting on one or two days immediately preceding the month of *Ramadhan*. Similarly, the disallowing of the fast of 'Id or 'doubt'[6] "because there is no interval

1. *Abu Daud*
2. *Ibid.*
3. Public Criers to *Salat*
4. *Bukhari* and *Muslim*
5. *Hujjat*, Vol, II, p. 39
6. Some of the Muslims used to fast on the day of 'Id when the moon of *Ramadhan* was sighted on the 30th of Sh'aban thinking that there might have been a mistake in the sighting of the moon and the month of *Ramadhan* might have started a day earlier. This was known as the fast of 'doubt'.

between it and *Ramadhan*" is based on the consideration that if the extremists will make it into a laudatory observance others also will follow their example and it will lead to perversion of faith. Extremism, in fact, is born out of over-cautiousness and the fast of 'doubt' belongs to the same category.

"In the sphere of quality, instances of the discouragement of excess are furnished by the prohibition of continuous fasting (i. e., on each day of the year), the exhortation regarding *Saheri* and the command to make it late because all this exaggeration and extremism is the product of Ignorance."

Fasting denotes the fulfilment of a Divine command. Just as it is disallowed to eat and drink and seek the satisfaction of other sensual appetites after the break of day, however powerful the urge is for them, abstention from food and drink is prohibited after sunset however strong the impulse may be for self-denial and asceticism. The deciding factor is not one's own incl nation but the Word of God, and the disregard of His Will and the audacious display of one's courage and spiritual stamina against His Judgement is identical to defiance of faith. The more a fasting person is free from the hold of desire and resigned to the Divine Will the more will he be true in his submission and removed from the taint of vanity and self-conceit.

As Hazrat Mujaddid Alf-Thani writes "The humility of a person who fasts is established by the delay in *Saheri* and promptness in *Iftar*. It is in keeping with his servitude and fulfils its objects."[1]

'Itikaf

'Itikaf[2] is for the completion of the benefits of fasting. If a person has remained denied of inner peace and tranquillity and has not been able to concentrate on prayer and supplication during the earlier part of *Ramadhan* he can make amends for it through *'Itikaf*.

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1. *Maktoobat* (Letter No. 45)
2. Continuing in the mosque during the last ten days of *Ramadhan*.

Says Allama Ibn-i-Qaiyyim[1] : "The basic purpose of *'Itikaf* is that the heart gets attached to God, and, with it, one attains inner composure and equanimity and pre-occupation with the mundane things of life ceases and absorption in the Eternal Reality takes its place, and the state is reached in which all fears, hopes and apprehension are superseded by the love and remembrance of God, every anxiety is transformed into the anxiety for Him and every thought and feeling is blended with the eagerness to gain His nearnes and earn His good favour, and devotion to the Almighty is generated instead of devotion to the world and it becomes the provision for the grave where there will be neither a friend nor a helper. This is the high aim and purpose of *'Itikaf* which is the speciality of the most sublime part of *Ramadhan*, i. e., the last ten days."[2]

Similary Hazrat Shah Waliullah remarks,[3] "Since *'Itikaf* in the mosque is a means to the attainment of peace of the mind and purification of the heart, and it affords an excellent opportunity for forging an identity with the angels and having a share in the blissfulness of the Night of Power[4] and for devoting oneself to prayer and meditation God has set apart the last ten days of the month of *Ramadhan* for it and made it a *Sunnat* for His pious and virtuous slaves."

The Prophet always observed *'Itikaf* and the Muslims have, on the whole, adhered to.[5] It has become a regular feature of the

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1. *Zad-el-Ma'ad* p. 176
2. *Zad-el-Ma'ad*, p. 178
3. *Hujjat*, Vol. II, p. 43
4. *Qadr* means power, honour, glory, and, also, decree and destiny, while *Qadar* denotes that "God distributed, divided or appointed, as through by means, sustenance, or the means of sustenance." According to some authorities, the appellation of *Lailatul Qadr* applies to the night in which the means of sustenance are apportioned.
5. All the schools of jurisprudence are agreed that *'Itikaf* is not obligatory but a *Sunnat*. According to Hanafi School it is *Sunnat-i-Muakkedah* (a religious practice which, though not obligatory, was observed

(*Continued on next page*)

month of *Ramadhan* and a confirmed practice with the devout and the faithful. Hazrat Ayesha relates that "the Prophet regularly observed '*Itikaf* during the last ten days of *Ramadhan* till the end of his life. After him, his wives maintained the tradition."[1]

It is related by Hazrat Abu Huraira that "the Prophet observed '*Itikaf* for ten days every year in the month of *Ramadhan*. In the year of his death he did it for twenty days."[2]

Night of Power

The pre-eminence of *Lailatul Qadr* (the Night of Power) has been repeatedly stressed in the Quran and the Traditions.

The Quran says:

> Lo! We revealed it on the Night of Power.
> Ah, What will convey unto thee what the Night of Power is!
> The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.
> The angels and the Holy Spirit (Gabriel) descend therein, by the permission of their Lord, with all decrees.
> (The night is) Peace until the rising of the dawn.
> (—xcvii)

The holy Prophet has said, "Whoever will offer prayers with faith and trust in Divine recompense during the Night of Power, all his previous sins will be forgiven.'[3]

God has concealed the Night of Power in the last ten days of *Ramadhan* so that the Muslims may seek it, their keenness (for faith and worship) may grow and all their nights during the concluding part of the month be spent in prayer as was the case with the sacred Prophet. It is related by Hazrat Ayesha that

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regularly by the holy Prophet and one is liable to be questioned for neglecting it without a valid reason) and *Sunnat-i-Kifayah* (meaning such religious practices which, if they are observed by a few persons, are considered to have been observed by all.)

1. *Bukhari* and *Muslim*
2. *Bukhari*
3. *Bukhari* and *Muslim*

"when the last ten days of *Ramadhan* began the Prophet used to prepare himself for prayer; he stayed awake throughout the night and also wakened the members of his family."[1]

That the Night of Power occurs during the last ten days of the month of *Ramadhan* or, rather, during the last seven days, and in the odd nights in them, is borne out by numerous Traditions. It is related by Ibn-i-Omar that "to some of the holy Companions the Night of Power was revealed in a dream to fall during the last seven days (of *Ramadhan*) upon which the Prophet remarked that since their dreams coincided as regards the last seven days those who wanted to seek it should do so during ihe last seven days."[2]

It is, further, related by Hazrat Ayesha that "the Prophet observed *'Itikaf* and went into seclusion during the last ten days of *Ramadhan* and he advised the people to look for the Night of Power during the seven days."[3]

It is also related by her that "the Prophet used to say that one should seek the Night of Power in the odd nights of the last ten days (of *Ramadhan*)."[4]

Writes Hazrat Shah Waliullah,[5] "Know that the Night of Power is of two kinds: one is in which decisions are made in the heavens. It is the Night in which the Quran, the whole of it, was sent down (to the firmament of the world) and, thereafter, was revealed little by little (to mankind). This Night comes only once in a year and it is also not necessary that it should be in the month of *Ramadhan*. But, most probably, it is so. On the occasion of the revelation of the Quran the Night was in *Ramadhan*.

"The other Night of Power is that in which a kind of spirituality is felt and the angels descend upon earth. The Muslims devote themselves to prayer during this Night and they are

1. *Bukhari* and *Muslim*
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Bukhari* and *Muslim*
4. *Bukhari*
5. *Hujjat*, Vol. II, pp. 41-42

benefitted by each other's spiritual exaltation and blissfulness. The angels come close to them, the devils run away, and their devotions are accepted. The Night occurs every year in the odd nights of the last ten days of *Ramadhan.* It can occur a little sooner or later, but it is always in the month of *Ramadhan.* Thus, when a person speaks of the former Night of Power he says that it rotates in the year and when he speaks of the later he says that it is found in the last ten days of *Ramadhan.* The Prophet has said, 'I see that your dreams coincide as regards the last seven days of *Ramadhan*, so whosoever wants to find it should look for it during the last seven days.' On another occasion he said, 'The Night was shown to me. I saw that I was bowing low in water and clay and it was the twenty-first night (of *Ramadhan*).' The difference of opinion among the holy Companions in respect of it is, in fact, the difference of intuition."

Reformative Role of Islam

In fasting, too, Islam has played a reformative role of great significance. It has made it an easy and pleasent observance, full of social and spiritual benefits and operative in the whole of the community.

The conception of fasting had undergone a complete transformation in the pre-Islamic times. We have seen how among the Jews it had become symbolic of suffering, defeat and misery. Instead of this gloomy way of looking at it, Islam gave it a new and positive character, animated with faith, hope and earnestness. It made it into a popular institution, evoking a ready response among its adherants. The assurances and happy tidings of Divine Recompense and Good Pleasure are a source of joy and inspiration to Muslims and they observe fasting cheerfully. The relevant Quranic verses and Traditions, with their irresistible appeal to the basic instincts of man, are immensely helpful in imparting to Muslims a sense of faith and hopefulness. A celestial Tradition, for example, says, "Fasting is the only thing

for which I (God) will recompense directly."[1] Another Tradition of the Prophet has it that "there are two moments of special joy for a person who fasts: one is when he breaks the fast and the other will come in the Hereafter when he will be presented before the Lord."[2]

Islam has surrounded the devotee who fasts with a unique atmosphere of virtue, dignity and sublimity. It is related that the Prophet once said, "The bad odour emanating from the mouth of a person who is fasting is more pleasant in the judgement of God than the sweet smell of musk."[3] This is radically different from the mood of oppression and pessimism prevalent among the Jews.

As we have pointed out earlier fasting in Judaism is synonymous with penance and mortification and this is how it has been interpreted generally in its holy Texts:

> "And this will be a statute for ever unto you; that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger who sojourneth among you: for on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you from all your sins before the Lord."[4]

> "And the Lord spoke unto Moses saying, also on the tenth day of this seventh month, there shall be day of atonement: it shall be a holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God."[5]

> "And ye shall have on the tenth day of this seventh month a holy convocation; and ye shall afflict your souls;

1. *Sehah-i-Sitta*
2. *Ibid*
3. *Sihah-i-Sitta*
4. Lev., 16 : 29-31
5. Lev., 23 : 26-28

ye shall not do any work therein."[1]

On the other hand, the Islamic *Shariat* holds fasting neither to be a means of self-torture nor a punishment. There is nothing in the Quran and the Traditions to suggest it. Fasting has been instituted in Islam as a form of worship the sole aim of which is the propitiation of God. The regulations laid down for it do not inevitably lead to the mortification of flesh. They do not place fasting beyond the endurance of man. On the contrary, the Islamic *Shariat* insists on the making of the pre-dawn meal of *Saheri* as a *Sunnat* and advises its followers to make it late. It also wants them to be prompt in *Iftar* and allows for rest and sleep both during the day and the night. It leaves the Muslims free to engage in business and other gainful pursuits as against the Jewish faith in which it is prohibited to attend to worldly affairs while keeping a fast and the Jews are required to spend their time wholly in prayer and seclusion.

In many ancient faiths (and evidence of it is available even now) fasting was confined to a particular class. Among the Hindus, for instance, it was reserved for the Brahmins, and, among the fire-worshippers, for the priests. In ancient Greece only the women were required to keep fast. Islam did away with these classifications and made fasting a universal religious duty.

> And whosoever of you is present (i. e., alive in the month of *Ramadhan*), let him fast the month
>
> (—ii : 185)

In spite of the discriminatory nature of their injunctions the ancient religions made no concession to those who were really incapable of fasting due to illness or some other reason. Islam exempted them and gave them full protection.

> And (for) him who is sick among you, or on a journey. the same number of other days.
>
> (—ii : 184)

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1. Num. 29-7

The Quran, further, says:

> And for those who can do it with hardship there is a ransom; the feeding of a man in need. (—ii: 184)

In some of the earlier faiths there was such an exaggeration or emphasis on severity that abstention from food was enjoined for forty days in continuation, whereas, in others, leniency was carried to the extent of forbiding only the eating of meat while all other articles of focd were allowed. But the law of Islam is equally opposed to excessive sternness and excessive leniency. Fasting in Islam is based on fairness and moderation. In it neither mortification is permitted nor slackness.

The Jews ate only once in twenty-four hours, i. e., at *Iftar.* Aside of it, they allowed themselves neither any food nor relaxation. In the night, too, they refrained from eating and drinking and indulging in other legitimate pleasures. The self-imposed restrictions were rejected by Islam.

> And eat and drink until the white thread becometh distinct to you from the black thread of the dawn.
> (—ii: 187)

Islam also condoned the lapses made inadvertently while fasting.[1] In it, a fast is not made void by an involuntary act or circumstances beyond one's control, like vomiting, nose bleeding and pollution in sleep.[2]

Besides, in some of the ancient faiths fasting was observed according to the solar months for which a knowledge of mathematics and astronomy was needed. Then, again, fasting days fell permanently in the same months. But, in Islam, fasting

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1 It is related by Hazrat Abu Huraira that the Prophet once said. "Any-one who ate or drank due to forgetfulness, let him not abandon the fast. It is a feast conferred upon him by God." Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim have also reproduced this Tradition in the following words: "Whoever forgot, and was fasting, and ate or drank anything, he should complete his fast for it was from God that he was fed or offered the drink."

2. It is related by Hazrat Abu Saeed Khudri that the Prophet once said, "A fast is not made void by three things: bleeding by means of a horn, vomiting and pollution in sleep."

is related to lunar months and the sighting of the new moon [1]

> They ask thee, (O Mohammad), of new moons.
> Say: They are fixed seasons for mankind and for the *Haj* (pilgrimage). (—ii : 189)

The Prophet said, "Begin your fasting on seeing it (the new moon) and end your fasting on seeing it. If there be a cloud and the moon cannot be sighted complete thirty days of fasting."[2]

Another Tradition says: "Do not keep fast unless you have sighted the (new) moon and do not end the month of fasting until you have sighted the (new) moon. If the horizon be not clear reckon up and calculate."[3]

The main advantage of it is that Muslims, wherever they may be living, in towns, villages, forests, or mountains, can begin and end the period of fasting without any diff culty or astronomical skill. Moreover, due to this arrangement the month of *Ramadhan* keeps on rotating in the year and it falls in different seasons, sometimes in the cold weather and sometimes in the hot weather. The Muslims, in this way, do not always have to fast in the scorching heat of the summer or the biting cold of the winter, and they are also benefitted physically by the change of climate and season. They become accustomed to the variations of the weather and remain patient and persevering and hopeful of the Divine reward in all circumstances.

When a person blessed with the Divine wealth of faith and Islam and also familiar with the history, philosophy and design of fasting in the earlier religions observes the condition of their adherants who carry it out and compares it with the Islamic

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1. It should be noted that in the *Shariat* the reliance is on the sighting of the new moon and not on its presence. Thus, for the sighting of the moon it is not at all necessary to take recourse to mathematical calculation or other devices as is being done in some Muslim countries. The words of the Tradition, in respect of it, are clear. It says, "Begin your fasts on seeing it (the new moon) and end them on seeing it."
2. *Tirmidhi*
3. *Sihah-i-Sitta* (with the exception of *Bukhari*)

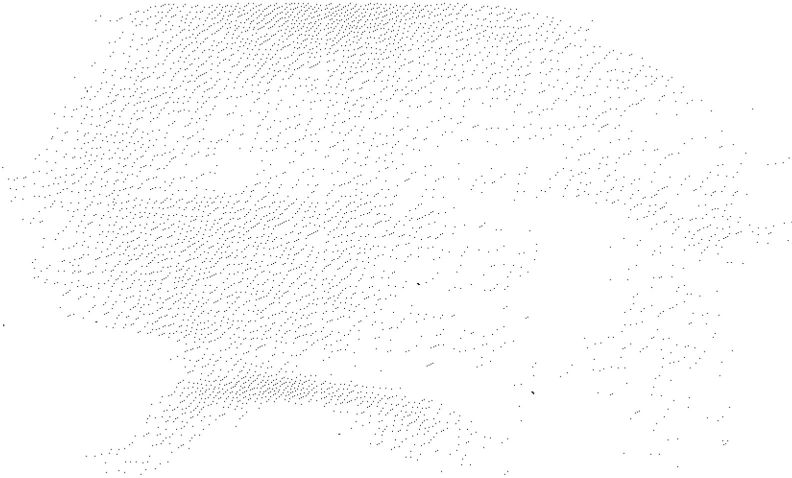
conception and structure of fasting his heart is filled with gratitude and tne stirring words of praise and thanksgiving come spontaneously to his lips.

> All praise to Allah, Who hath guided us to this. We could not truly have been led aright if Allah had not guided us. Verily, the Messengers of our Lord did bring the truth. (—vii : 43)

HAJ

(Pilgrimage)

And proclaim unto mankind the Pilgrimage (the Haj). They will come unto thee on foot and also on every lean camel; they will come from every deep ravine. (-xxii : 27)



IV

And proclaim unto mankind the Pilgrimage (the *Haj*). They will come unto thee on foot and also on every lean camel ; they will come from every deep ravine that they may witness things that are of benefit to them, and mention the name of Allah on appointed days over the beast of cattle that He hath bestowed upon them. Then eat thereof and feed therewith the poor and the distressed. Then let them make an end of their unkemptness and pay their vows and go around the ancient House (the Ka'aba).

(—xxii : 27-29)

ISLAM is a religion of pure Monotheism. It does not admit of any intermediaries or intercessors between man and his Creator.[1] It frowns upon all material and visible objects which might become centres of devotion and to which people paid spiritual homage in one form or another. There is no place in it for an intervening agency, a manifestation, an image or an idol. There is also no priestly class in it nor a tribe of monks hermits.

And when My servants question thee concerning Me,

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1. Excepting, of cource, the Apostles in the sense that in the preaching and propagation of the Divine Call and in expounding the Divine Attributes and lending guidance along the Straight Path they form an essential link between God and His bondmen and faith itself is dependent upon the duty they discharge as revealers and interpreters of the Divine Will.

then surely I am nigh. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he crieth unto Me. So let them hear My Call and let them trust in Me, in order that they may be led aright.

(—ii : 186)

So worship Allah, making religion pure for Him (only). Surely, pure religion is for Allah only. And those who choose protecting friends beside Him (say) : we Worship them only that they may bring us near unto Allah.

(—xxxix : 2-3)

Islam dwells at such a high level of inttellectual purity, highmindedness, honesty of purpose and sincerity of action that it is impossible to conceive of a better ideal or a nobler concept. No other faith or philosophy in the world can compare with it in these respects, nor can anyone improve upon the description given in the Quran of the Uniqueness and Excellence of God.

Naught is His likeness ; and He is the Hearer, the Seer (of everything).

(—xlii : 11)

Landmarks of Allah

But human nature being what it is, the quest for something within the perceptible phenomenon through which one could seek the satisfaction of the inward impulse of love, adoration and submission has always formed a part of his essential character and personality.

For the fulfilment of this need, God has appointed certain visible and material objects which are consecrated to Him and bear a special relation to His Blessed Name and are held popularly to be His own and upon which there is so much of His Grace that the mere sight of them evokes His remembrance. Besides, with them are associated events, rites and experiences that serve as the portents of Allah, and remind us of His faith and the fortitude and endeavour of His Apostles. He has pleased to give to these objects the name of the *Landmarks of*

Allah, and to proclaim that to pay reverence to them is to pay reverence to Him while to show disprespect to them is to show disrespect to Him. He has permitted, or, rather, invited mankind to gratify its innate urge for love, closeness and observation through them.

> That is (the command). And whoso magnifieth the Landmarks of Allah, it surely is from the devotion of the hearts.
>
> (—xxii : 32)
>
> That is (the command). And whoso magnifieth the Landmarks of Allah, it will be well for him in the sight of his Lord.
>
> (—xxii : 30)

Instinct of Love

Man is neither wholly a rational animal nor is he so helpless as to be obliged to make his submission to any law or authority. He is also not a part in a machine which moves along a set course and according to a fixed law. He is mind as well as heart, faith as well as intuition and submission as well as love. It is in the many-sidedness of his personality that lies the secret of his greatness and nobility and it is through it that he has been able to overcome seemingly insuperable obstacles and perform superhuman deeds. What is more, it was on account of this grand peculiarity of his being that he was entrusted with the 'responsibility' the heavens, the earth and the mountains had declined to shoulder and has succeeded in rising to heights that are the envy of the angels,

The bond between man and his Creator is not only of a legal or logical character that may be limited to the payment of dues, the observance of laws and the enjoyment of rights. It is also a bond of love and other sublime emotions like those of devotion, tenderness and self-effacement and its scope is so wide that no human thought or deed has remained unaffected by it. Islam does not forbid this love. On the other hand, it calls us to it, encourages it and sustains it.

Says the Quran :

> Those who believe are stauncher in their love for Allah.
>
> (—ii : 165)
>
> Say (O Mohammad) : If your fathers, and your sons, and your breathren, and your wives, and your tribe, and the wealth you have acquired, and merchandise for which you fear that there will be no sale, and dwellings ye desire are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His way : then wait till Allah bringeth His Command to pass. Allah guideth not the wrong-doers.
>
> (—ix : 24)

The Quran, while speaking of the Divine Apostles, draws pointed attention to their qualities of love, earnestness and sacrifice. Of Prophet Yahya (John), for instance, it says :

> And We gave him wisdom when a child. And compassion from Our presence, and purity; and he was devout.
>
> (—xix : 12-13)

The wonderful episode of Hazrat Ibrahim (Abraham) is a saga of love and dedication. The Quran specifically mentions how Hazrat Ibrahim placed the knife on the throat of his son and did not remove it till God had witnessed the depth and intensity of his sincerity, fortitude and sacrifice.

> We called unto him : O Ibrahim ! Thou hast already fulfilled the vision. Lo ! Thus do We reward the good. Lo ! That verily was a clear test.
>
> (—xxxvii : 104-6)

Again, in the praise of Hazrat Ibrahim it says :

> Lo ! Ibrahim was mild, imploring, penitent.
>
> (—xi : 75)

Love is Generated by the Knowledge of the Attributes

If the Quran has dwelt at length on the Attributes, Functions and Bounties of the Lord it is mainly because the knowledge of the Divine Attributes holds the key to the sentiments

of love and devotion. Scholars like Imam Ibn-i-Taimiyah have defined the Quranic method of explaining the Essential and Permanent Qualities of the Almighty Creator as 'conciseness of the negative' and 'diffuseness of the positive.' It is the detailed description of the Benevolent Attributes of God and their signs and portents that feeds the flame of love within the human breast and fills it up with fervour and enthusiasm. If the negative Attributes are the mentors of the mind, the positive Attributes are the mentors of the heart.[1] Without the knowledge of the Beautiful Names of God and His Immaculate Qualities, with which the holy Quran and the Traditions are replete and which have been a constant source of joy and inspiration to His devoted servants, faith would have got reduced to a dogma and lost its capacity to stir the innermost recesses of the heart and move it to its depths with sincerity and humbleness during prayer and repentance. Without it the relationship between God and man would have been a mechanical, qualified and restrained relationship in which there was neither breadth nor flexibility nor enthusiasm, and life, a dull, dry and narrow affair, bereft of the sweet madness of love and the delightful poignant bite of desire.

Were this celestial wealth to be taken away from man what would there be to distinguish between life and death, between humanity and the vegetable kingdom ?

Worthless is the Cup that Never Overflows

To quench the thirst of the spirit and to calm down the flame of love it was needed that the heart and the eyes of a Muslim should overflow from time to time, and, thus, provide an outlet for the agonizing feelings of loneliness and separation that are rising within the depths of his being. Of what use is

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1. In the Quran where the negative Attributes of God are set forth, i. e., where it is explained what God is not, only short pharases like *Naught is His likeness* have been used while where His positive Attributes are mentioned, i. e., it is expounded what He is, the discussion is both detailed and forceful as in the last Section of *Sura-i-Hashr*.

the cup that gets filled to the brink but never overflows ?

The Haj

Imam Ghazali was alive to the fact that love was the genuine need of a sensitive human being which he was always seeking to satisfy. The House of Ka'aba (at Mecca) and all the *Landmarks of Allah* that are associated with it and the *Haj* with the rites and formalities which go to make it contain an ideal provision for the gratification of this basic human urge and necessity.

> And (remember) when We prepared for Ibrahim the place of the (holy) House, saying : Ascribe thou nothing as partner unto Me, and purify My House for those who make the round (thereof) and those who stand and those who bow and make prostration. And proclaim unto mankind the Pilgrimage. They will come unto thee on foot and on every lean camel ; they will come from every deep ravine. That they may witness things that are of benefit to them, and mention the name of Allah on appointed days over the beast of cattle that He hath bestowed upon them. Then eat thereof and feed therewith the poor and the distressed. Then let them make an end of their unkemptness and pay their vows and go around the ancient House.
>
> (—xxii : 26-29)

Imam Ghazali writes, "If there is an earnest desire for nearness to God a Muslim will be compelled to strive for it. A lover is passionately attached to everything that bears an association with the beloved. The House of Ka'aba is associated with God and a Muslim should, therefore, instinctively feel drawn to it, to speak nothing of the attraction of the Recompense promised on it."[1]

Writing in the same vein, Hazrat Shah Walliullah remarks, "Sometimes when a man is overcome with the desire for his

1. *Ihya-ul-Uloom*, Vol. I, p. 24

Lord and love surges powerfully in his breast and he looks around for the satisfaction of his inner urge it appears to him that the *Haj* alone is the means to it."[1]

The *Salat* a man offers up a several times a day could be regarded as sufficient to fulfil the need of soothing and gratifying his emotions. It cou'd have provided him with a opportunity to give a vent to his feelings and to alleviate the agony of separation by sheding a few tears during it. But these tears could not quench his thirst. They could only suppress it for the time being for they did not possesses the power to put down the all-consuming fire of love which, sometimes, turned the heart into a blazing furnace.

Golden Cage of Materia m

Likewise, fasting could be helpful in slaking the thirst of the soul and curbing the intensity of animal appetites for hunger and abstinence do possess a purificatory quality. But the hours of fasting are limited and they are also often surrounded by things that do not go well with it. An atmosphere of slothfulness and gormandising gets created around the perso who fasts and the society in which he lives has itself become so permissive of sensuality and godlessness that he feels isolated like an island in a sea.

A Muslim, therefore, had to be furnished with an opportunity to take a bold and adventurous plunge which could break his chains and release him from the old and dingy prison-house of everyday existence. It was to be in the nature of a leap which could, in one stride, carry him from this rotten, hide-bound, calculating and artificial life to a new, fascinating and boundless world where love reigned supreme and the heart held sway over everything, where he was delivered from every kind of servitude and deification, and the man-made limitations of race, geography and politics died away and melted into nothingness, and where the creed of pure and unalloyed Monotheism—of the

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1. *Hujjatillah-il-Baligha*, Vol. I, p. 59

unity of Godhead, Providence, humanity, faith and purpose—became the bedrock of his way of living and he, along with his brethren, sang enthusiastically the praises of the Lord and raised the heartwarming cry of:

> O God, here I am! Here I am in Thy Presence! Thou art without a partner! Here I am! All Praise is for Thee and from Thee are all Blessings! To Thee alone belongs Power and Rule! Thou art without a Partner!

Even after the prayer-service a Muslim celebrates regularly every day, the fasting he observes yearly in the month of *Ramadhan* and the poor-due he pays, provided that he possesses the taxable minimum of wealth, at the end of each year there was the need for him of a special period of time, of a season of enchantment and adoration, eccentricity and infatuation.

Revolt against the Worship of Matter

It was also necessary for a Muslim to rebel, once in a while, against the cold and cheerless intellect. A life which is not occasionally shaken by tumult and revolt is not worth living. A man should, at times, liberate himself by breaking the fictitious bonds of habit and custom, of pedantic law, artificial taboos and stereotyped conventions, and handing over the control of his affairs to the heart. He should, at least once in a lifetime, go into wilderness in the manner of a dejected lover and give a proof of the sweet madness of love as is the wont of the people of faith and sensitiveness for only then can he have a taste of real freedom. Who will call him free who is permanently a slave to convention and society? How can a person be a true Monotheist when he is a prisoner of his own habits, desires and inclinations? How can he be considered loyal and faithful if he is always obeying the dictates of the mind and unless he weighs everything in the scales of his created intellect and its material advantages become apparent to him he cannot arouse himself to a deed of devotion and fidelity?

The *Haj*, in its particular form, is entirely opposed to the self-imposed laws and the mechanical routine of life the worshippers

which neither dries up nor dwindles. It is sufficient for the whole of mankind and for all generations to come. The world has been drinking at it and will continue to do so till the end of time. There is propitiousness in it as well as health and a reward.

The Almighty has made the spontaneous act of a pious, believing lady a deliberate observance and prescribed it as a religious duty for everyone including kings and potentates, thinkers and scholars. Unless they perform the *Sa'ee* between the hills of Safa and Marwa their *Haj* will remain incomplete. The two points are, in fact, the destination of all devout souls and *Sa'ee* offers the aptest illustration of the viewpoint of a believer which combines both reason and emotion and faith and feeling. A believer makes a full use of his intellectual powers in his worldly needs but, sometimes, also gives a free rein to the emotional urges whose roots are deeper and stronger than those of thought. He lives in a world which is full of temptations. But like the pilgrim doing the *Sa'ee* between Safa and Marwa he passes quickly through it without being distracted. His heart is set on his destination. To him life is like the few turns he takes between the two hills in obedience to the Command of his Lord and in emulation of the example set by the pious precursors. His faith does not come in the way of critical study and investigation and his *Sa'ee* (exertion) offers no hindrance to trustfulness and reliance on God. It is an event whose worth and significance can be summed up in just two words : love and obedience.

The child (Ismail) grows up and attains the age when a father is drawn most lovingly to his offspring. He goes out with his father, runs with him and keeps him company in many ways. The loving and affectionate father is very fond of his son. And, herein lie the seeds of crisis for his heart; a pure and noble heart which is reserved exclusively for the love of the Divine One. It is not anybody's heart but of the Friend of Allah. Love can put up with anything but a co-sharer. It cannot suffer a rival. When such is the case with human love what would Divine love be like ? This is the position when inspiration

through *Ruku*, *Sujud* and other acts which are also conducive to meekness and self-abasement. But *Rami Jemar* and *Sa'ee* and the other similar rituals of the *Haj* impart no joy or satisfaction to the heart. They do not appeal to human nature and the intellect also does not discover any sense or purpose in them. These acts are performed solely in a spirit of obedience, knowing that it is the command of God which has to be carried out in any event. The idea is to divest the mind of its authority and dominance and to keep the self away from things for which it may develop an inclination because when the mind fully accepts a thing the heart automatically gets inclined to it and the inner bent or liking itself becomes the mainspring of action. The spirit of complete surrender and submission is, thus, lost in its observance. It was said by the Prophet pointedly at the time of the *Haj*, 'Here I am for the *Haj* with a true heart and in a spirit of obeisance and servility.' The Prophet did not use these words for any other mode of worship including *Salat*.

"Since God, in His Wisdom, has made salvation dependent upon the carrying out of duties with loyalty, devotion and humbleness the devotional acts and observances (whose inner significance is beyond the understanding of man) are more efficacious in diverting the attention from self-purification and virtuousness to complete self-surrender."[1]

Of the ritual of *Rami Jemar* Imam Ghazali tells that its very essence lies in absolute submission to a Divine Command. "Its aim", writes he, "is abstract obedience and compliance with commands, irrespective of their nature, so that complete servitude became evident. Reason or volition have nothing to do with it. It, further, signifies a resemblance with Hazrat Ibrahim for it was at this place that the accursed Devil had tried to tempt him and to create a doubt in his mind about the *Haj* Pilgrimage and Hazrat Ibrahim was inspired by God to throw pebbles at him so that he left him alone. Now, if someone were to imagine that Hazrat Ibrahim had thrown pebbles at the

1. *Ihya-ul-Uloom*, Vol. I., p. 240

Devil because he had appeared before him in reality but since, in his own case the Devil was not to be seen, it was senseless to carry out the formality he should know that this notion, too, had been planted in his mind by the Devil in order to weaken his resolve to humble him."

"Know that;" he goes on to stress, "Apparently you throw the pebbles at *Jemaratul 'Uqubah* (the last Pillar) but, in fact, they hit the Devil in the face and break his back for nothing humiliates him more than the carrying out of a Divine Command solely out of reverence for Him and in a spirit of loyalty and obedience, without choice or intellect having a share in it."[1]

Similarly, about; *Qurbani* (sacrificial offering of animals) Imam Ghazali observes :

"Know that compliance with the command of *Qurbani* is a means to the propitiation of Allah. It should be carried out readily and in the hope and expectation that God, in His Mercy, will protect each and every limb of yours from the fire in return for each and every limb of the animal sacrificed by you. That is how it occurs in the Traditions. The bigger the sacrificed animal is, the greater will the reward be on it.[2]

Absolute Obedience

What the *Haj* signifies is nothing more and nothing less than blind faith and total submission. It stands for unqualified obedience and earnest yielding to a demand. Sometimes the pilgrim is seen in Mecca and sometimes in Mina, Arafat and Muzdalifa. Sometimes he makes a halt and sometimes he travels At one time he pitches his tent and at another he knocks it down. He is the slave of every nod and gesture and does simply what he is called upon to do. He has no choice of his own. He has hardly halted at Mina that he is required to move on to Arafat but without breaking the journey at

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1. *Ihya-ul-Uloom*, Vol. I, p. 243
2. *Ibid.*, p. 240

Muzdalifa. On reaching Arafat he engages himself in prayer throughout the day and when the sun has set he finds himself tired and wanting to spend the night there but is commanded to proceed to Muzdalifa. He has been regular in prayer all his life but there he is told to forgo the *Salat* of *Maghrib* for he is the bondman of Allah, not of *Salat* or habit. The *Salat* he offers at Muzdalifa jointly with that of *Isha*. His stay at Muzdalifa is very pleasant and he wishes to prolong it but it is not allowed to him and he is bidden to leave for Mina.

The same was the practice of Hazrat Ibrahim and of all the Divine Apostles and men of faith and virtue, now travelling, now staying, now meeting, now parting, neither servile to desire nor yielding to caprice.

Time and Place

No other place could be more appropriate for it than Mecca where the fore-runner of the votaries of faith and the most dearly loved bondman of God of his time had presented the most glowing tribute of devotion and sacrifice the world has ever known. All the Prophets of the Lord, Monotheists and adorers of Divinity who came after him followed in his footsteps, emulated his example in every detail and re-enacted the same story of fealty and love. They, in the same manner, circumambulated around the House of Ka'aba, performed the *Sa'ee* between Safa and Marwa, encamped at Arafat, spent the night at Muzdalifa, threw the pebbles at *Jamerat* and offered the sacrifice of animals at Mina.

Thus, in time and space, in the chapters of the episode that is repeated over and over again, in the rites and formalities in which the example of Hazrat Ibrahim is followed, in the life-giving drafts of love from which the pilgrims draw new vitality in the warmth of feeling and enthusiasm which envelops them entirely, in the company of diverse groups of Muslims which is available to them all the time, in the religious and spiritual congregation the like of which is not to be seen anywhere, and in the soulful melodies of prayer, supplication and repentance

that fill the atmosphere constantly, that vital element, that indescribable quality is still present which infuses a new life, imparts a new keenness, instils a new hope and revives the languishing flame of love and evokes the Mercy of the Lord.

Many enlightened scholars of Islam have referred to the miraculous quality of this congregation of attracting the blessings of Allah and arousing the hearts, however insensitive they may have grown, and enkindling in them the feelings of devotion and earnestness. As Imam Ghazali, for instance, writes: "When the thoughts, hopes and aspirations are concentrated on a particular point, when the hearts are seized with eagerness, the hands are stretching towards Allah and the eyes are lifting towards the heavens, when everyone in jointly and with full attention and solicitude begging the Mercy of the Lord then, at that time, do not imagine that the Supreme Being will disappoint them, allow their exertions to go waste and keep them denied of His Favours."[1]

Hazrat Shah Waliullah, similarly, has said, "The fundamental principle of the *Haj* is that a large body of pious and virtuous servants got together at a particular time and recollected the state of those on whom was a special favour of Allah, such as the Prophets, the Truthful, the Duteous and the Martyrs, and at a place which abounded with the signs of the Almighty, the Gracious One, and where the meritorious and whole-souled representatives of the *Ummat* assembled, moved by reverence for the *Landmarks of Allah*, crying and beseeching, invoking His Aid and seeking His Forgiveness, because when the hearts beat in unison and people come together in this spirit there is no thriftiness in the bestowal of Mercy and Benevolence. The Prophet has said that the Satan never feels more dejected, crestfallen and humiliated than on the day of *Arafa*."[2]

Hazrat Shah Waliullah goes on to say: "It is also a part of purification of the self that a man should break his journey

1. *Ihya-ul-uloom*, Vol. I, p. 243
2. *Hujjatullah*, Vol. I, p. 59

and stay at the places where the spiritually evolved and praiseworthy 'Friends of Allah' have been staying with reverence of the heart and uttermost devotion, filling the air with His Name. t will prove to be a source of nearness to the Angels and the Celestial World for men of virtue because when they will stay there they will also get dyed in the same hue."[1]

Renewal of Contact

One of the chief purposes of the *Haj* is the renewal of bond or contact with Hazrat Ibrahim, the founder *Millat-i-Hanifi*.[2] It affords a splendid opportunity to safeguard his legacy, to compare one's own way of living with the way he had shown and to take stock of the condition of Muslims with a view to improving it. The *Haj* is a kind of annual concourse through which the Muslims can look into themselves, discover their faults and chalk out plans for their regeneration and for ridding themselves of the influences they may have accepted from peoples and communities among which they live.

In the words of Hazrat Shah Waliullah, "One of the objects of the *Haj* is the preservation of the legacy of Hazrat Ibrahim and Hazrat Ismail both of whom can be said to be the leaders of *Millat-i-Hanifi* and its founders in Arabia. The sacred Prophet, also was raised up so that through him *Millat i-Hanifi* gained ascendency in the world and was victorious.

"It has been declared by God that : *The faith of your father Ibrahim is yours*" (—xxii : 78). It is, therefore, essential for us to protect the things we have received from the leader of this community as an inheritance viz., personal characteristics[3] and rituals

1. *Hujjatillah*, Vol. I, 59
2. Denoting a community which is committed exclusively to God.
3. The term includes ten items : the cutting (or trimming) of moustaches, the growing of the beard, the brushing of teeth with *Miswak* (twig), the cleaning of the nose with water, the cutting of the nails, the washing of the phalanges of fingers, the plucking of the hair of the armpits, the removal of the hair under the navel, the purification after a natural

(*Continued on next page*)

of the *Haj*. As the Prophet once said, 'Stay at places set apart for the *Haj* for you are the inheritors of your father's legacy'."[1]

Revivification of the Episode of Ibrahim

The most fascinating feature of the *Haj* is the spirit of enchantment, devotion and self-effacement which pervades the entire pilgrimage, from the beginning to the end. In it the governance of the mind is entrusted to the heart and the glorious example of the earnest men of God and His genuine adorers, and their fore-runner, Hazrat Ibrahim, the Friend of Allah, is followed in every act and observance. Sometimes the pilgrim walks zealously round the House of Ka'aba, sometimes he kisses the Black Stone and sometimes he portrays the intensity of mother's love at Safa and Marwa by running where Hazrat Hajira, the mother of Hazrat Ismail, had run and walking with poise and dignity where she had walked in that way. Thereafter, he is bidden to leave for Mina on the 8th day of Zil-Hijja, and, then, to stay in the valley of Arafat and devote himself earnestly to prayer and supplication. The night is spent at Muzdalifa and, in the morning, he returns to Mina. All this is done solely and for no other reason than to emulate the example of Hazrat Ibrahim and the sacred prophet.

The most striking part, however, of this unique display of love, imitation and emulation is the rite of *Rami Jemar* which is simply the simulation of an act perfomed by Hazrat Ibrahim. There is a force in following the example of the devout servants of the Lord which is catching. The inner radiance of these glorious specimens of faith, their matchless spirit of love and dedication is transmitted to those who strive to follow in their

(*Continued from page 234*)

evacuation with water and circumcision (—Reproduced from *Abu Da'ud* as related by Hazrat Ayesha). About the tenth item the narrator says that she was not sure whether it was circumcision or rinsing of mouth but Qazi Ayaz and Imam Nawawi are definite that it was circumcision.

1. *Hujjat*, Vol. I. p. 42

footsteps like an electric current. It is the best and most effective way to attract the Mercy of the Lord. No spectacle is more enthralling for those who have experienced this feeling than the getting together of ardent adorers and faithful bondmen on that blessed land for re-enacting the magnificent episode and recreating the sublime events that had taken place thousands of years ago but have been eternalised by God and endowed with His gracious acceptance. It has been decreed by Him that His loyal and truthful servants, from all over the world, will re-enact the whole series of events in the same way and in the spirit of defeating and disgracing the Devil, fortifying the faith and emulating the soul-stirring example of Hazrat Ibrahim.

Life-Story of Hazrat Ibrahim as Related in Quran

Hazrat Ibrahim was born in a leading family of priests at Urwa (now included in Iraq). Image-carving was the occupation of his ancestors who were also the keepers of the biggest temple in the town. His family was attached to that place of worship both spiritually and professionally and when faith gets mixed up with occupation and religious sentiment with economic self-interest the situation invariably becomes very complex and delicate. In this atmosphere of gloom and rigidity there was little to encourage the growth of true love and devotion to God or move the people to rebel against the absurdity of polytheistic tenets and idolatrous practices. But with Hazrat Ibrahim whom God had chosen for Apostleship and the resuscitation of humanity it was different.

> And We, verily, gave Ibrahim of old his proper course, and We were Aware of him. (—xxi : 51

Hazrat Ibrahim launches his crusade against Ignorance from a stage where even most powerful revolutionary movements, generally, fail to make a headway. It was the stage of family, of the home in which a man is born and brought up and to which he is bound in loyalty and affection by innumerable ties. Now, all those things happen that have been related so eloquently in the Quran. These include the breaking of the idols by him, the

consternation of the priests of the temple and their unbounded anger and revengefulness, the lighting up of a huge fire for this young and deep-hearted rebel, the cooling down of the fire and its turning into a source of peace and safety for him, and finally, his forceful speech before the tyrant and straightforward replies to questions put to him in his Court [1]

Hazrat Ibrahim's refusal to submit to the moral and spiritual perversion and depravity of his age evokes such a fearful response in the people of his town that they all turn against him. He is excluded from social fellowship and persecuted by the rulers. But this oppressive and spiteful treatment makes no impression upon him. He remains supremely unmoved as if it was just what he was looking forward to. Cheerfully and without rancour, he migrates from his birth-place because is not the real wealth. the wealth of faith, still in his possession, intact and undivided ? He travels alone, without a friend or helper. Everywhere, on the way he meets the same type of people, the prevalence of ignorance, idolatry, corruption and sensuality upon which he had turned his back. On arrival in Egypt he is confronted with a grave situation but succeeds in leaving that country safely with his wife on whom its ruler had an evil eye. Ultimately, he reaches Syria where he decides to stay for its climate is agreeable. Here, again, he takes up the mission of preaching the Oneness of God and denouncing idolatry with the same singleness of purpose.

Hazrat Ibrahim takes a liking for Syria. It abounds in natural scenery, its soil is fertile and its people are prosperous. But, soon, he is bidden to go to another land which is just the opposite of it in richness and fertility. But he has no choice in the matter. He has no rights, only duties. He is but to obey, not to reason why. He has no preference for any country.. The whole world is his home-land and the entire mankind his family. He is commanded to migrate from Syria with his wife, Hajira, and infant son.

Hazrat Ibrahim comes to a valley which is devoid of

1. These happenings are described in detail in *Sura-i-Ambia* (51-70).

vegetation and surrounded on all sides by rugged mountains. Its climate is severe and it is also entirely uninhabited. There is no one in it who can be a source of solace or comfort. He is told to leave his helpless wife and child there and move away solely on the strength of faith in God and in compliance with his command. He is required to do so in such a state that he is totally resigned to the Divine Will and there is not a trace of fear or hesitation in his heart, nor a shadow of doubt regarding the promise of his Lord. On the contrary, he is to act in defiance of all the dictates of reason and experience, and yet to remain steadfast, firm and unflinching, giving the fullest proof of reliance upon God and disregard of material means and resources when he is assailed with doubt or fear grips his heart.

After Hazrat Ibrahim has departed all those things happen, in the natural course, that were dreaded. The child becomes restless with thirst, and so does the mother. But where was water to be found in that dry, unoccupied land? There was not a drop of it in the whole valley. Overcome with anxiety and with the intensity of mother's love, Hazrat Hajira begins to run frantically between the two hills (of Safa and Marwa) in search of water and in the hope of meeting a caravan that may be passing that way. When she approaches the other hill she is suddenly seized with fear about the safety of her child? Is it alive or has something happened to it? She hurries back to the child and assures herself that it was well. Then she again runs towards that hill, hoping against hope that she will come upon a traveller or find a source of water up there. She is worried and apprehensive. At the same time, she is calm and serene. She is a Prophet's wife and a Prophet's mother but she does not believe in the futility of effort. She does not regard striving and the seeking of material means to be contrary to the spirit of faith and reliance on God. She is disturbed but not dejected. She has the utmost trust in God but there is no room in it for inaction. The world has never seen such a spectacle before. The Providence, at last, is stirred and a spring bursts forth as if from nowhere. This is the blessed, everflowing fountain of Zam Zam

of matter and intellect and the prisoners of discipline and orderly conduct are addicted to. What it aims at is that faith in the Unseen and the urge and ability to carry out an order, blindly and unhesitatingly—simply because it is an order—may take root in ones's inner self and the cold and calculating intellect may be dispossessed, for a time, of its authority which weighs and balances everything and lays stress only on its logical and perceptible aspect.

Imam Ghazali has delved deep into the spirit and purpose of the *Haj* and drawn an excellent portrait of it with his inimitable pen. He says:

"In its nature and design the House of Allah is like a regal court to which adorers and admirers, and those stricken with the torment of separation, come from far and near, way-worn, haggard and dishevelled, with their heads bowed in submission and the conviction of their wretchedness embedded in their hearts, forgetting themselves before His Glory and Magnificence and knowing fully well and affirming wholeheartedly that He is too Sublime, too Exalted to be encompassed by a boundary-wall or contained in a city or town, so that their devotion and servitude and crying and lamentation may reach their limit and nothing is left wanting by way of obeisance and self-surrender.

"That is why they are required to carry out certain acts and perform certain rites that lie beyond the domain of the intellect, such as, *Rami Jemar*[1] and *Sa'ee*.[2] All these acts signify the highest form of slavery and bondage. *Zakat* is an excercise in compassion the purpose of which is easily understood. *Saum* is a spiritual discipline for self-purification and suppression of the evil propensities the Devil exploits in order to gain his end, and in it the aspect of devoting oneself to prayer by cutting down engagements is manifest. In *Salat* the Greatness and Glory of the Lord and the bondman's own humbleness is revealed

1. The throwing of pebbles at the Satan.
2. The ritual of covering, at a brisk pace, seven times each way, the distance between the two points of Safa and Marwa.

comes to Hazrat Ibrahim that he should offer the sacrifice of his son. The dreams of the Prophets are in the nature of Divine revelations. Hence, when the suggestion is conveyed to him again and again he knows in his heart that it is the Will of God which shall be done. He asks his son for without his consent the deed cannot be performed. The son remains steadfast. He gives a glittering proof of self-surrender. It could, of course, not be otherwise for was he himself not a Prophet, and the son and grandson of a Prophet?

> (Ibrahim) said: O my dear son, I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice thee. So look. what thinkest thou? He said: O my father! Do that which thou art commanded. Allah willing, thou shalt find me of the steadfast. (—xxxvii : 102)

There, now, takes place a miraculous event that cannot be explained by any known natural law. Hazrat Ibrahim comes out with his beloved son. He is going to sacrifice the son at the Command of God, and son, too, is accompanying him willingly. The goal before them is the same. It is compliance with the Command of Allah and total resignation to His Will. In the way they are met by the Devil who is always eager to deceive man and to deprive him of goodness and rectitude. He tries to dissuade them from carrying out their intention by presenting before them the alternative of the defiance of God in a most alluring manner and by playing upon their natural weakness for life. But they do not listen to him and get ready for the supreme act of submission. The moment, finally, comes which is enough to afflict with agony not only men but even the djinns and angels. Hazrat Ibrahim lays his son on the ground, places the knife on his throat and proceeds to cut it. But the Will of God intervenes because what was intended was not the slaying of Hazrat Ismail but of the love that had come in the way of the love of Allah and begun to compete with it. That love had been killed with the placing of the knife on Hazrat Ismail's throat. Hazrat Ismail was born to live and to prosper and to raise up a lineage which was also to include the Last of the Prophets. How

could he be put to death before the fulfilment of his mission ? God, therefore, sent down a ram, as a ransom for him, from the Heaven so that it may be slaughtered in his place and made it a religious ceremony to be observed by all the followers of Hazrat Ibrahim and their descendants. During the 'sacrificial days' of the *Haj* they revive the memory of the 'sublime sacrifice' and make an offering of their wealth to God by spending it in His way.

> Then, when they both had surrendered to Allah, and he (Hazrat Ibrahim) had flung him (Hazrat Ismail) down on his face, We called unto him ; O Ibrahim ! Thou hast already fulfilled the vision. Lo ! Thus do We reward the good. Lo ! That verily was a clear test. Then We ransomed him with a tremendous victim. And We left for him among the later folk (The Salutation) : Peace be unto Ibrahim. (—xxxvii : 103-109)

The incident which took place between Hazrat Ibrahim and the Satan has also been immortalised by God and it has been decreed by Him that pebbles should be thrown where the Satan stood in Hazrat Ibrahim's way and tried to dissuade him from carrying out the Divine Command. He has raised it to a ritual which has to be performed during the most auspicious days of the *Haj* pilgrimage. The object is to produce a feeling of revulsion against the Satan and to make it serve as an expression of defiance and resistance against him. The pilgrim draws a good deal of joy and inspiration from it provided that he is sound of faith and his understanding is correct and there is present in him a genuine desire to submit to the Divine Will. In re-enacting this part of the episode he feels that he is engaged in a solemn struggle against the forces of evil in which the defeat of the Satan is certain.

Years roll by on this event, the child has grown into a young man and the mantle of Apostleship has fallen upon him. The call of Hazrat Ibrahim has, also, borne fruit and spread widely. It was now in need of a strong base which could lend support to the Divine faith and sustain it. There were innumer-

able temples and places in the world where the Devil and the sensual appetites were freely worshipped. But, on God's good earth there was, till then, not a place dedicted solely to His worship. Thus, now that the faith had taken root and the foundations of *Ummat-i-Muslima*[1] were securely laid Hazrat Ibrahim was commanded to build the House of God which was to be the refuge of all mankind. Father and son together construct the sacred edifice which, though very simple and ordinary to look at, is full of grandeur and solidity from the point of view of its object. They both carry stones and raise its walls.

> And (the time also is worth remembering) when Ibrahim and Ismail were raising the foundations of the House, (Ibrahim) prayed : Our Lord ! Accept from us this Duty ; Lo ! Thou, only Thou, art the Hearer, the Knower. Our Lord ! And make us submissive unto Thee, and of our seed a nation submissive unto Thee, and show us our ways of worship, and relent toward us, Lo ! Thou, only Thou, art the Relenting, the Merciful.
>
> (—ii : 127-8)

The House was raised on the foundations of matchless faith and single-minded devotion. The Almighty God bestowed His choicest acceptance upon it and endued it with permanence. He endowed it with inner as well as outward elegance, made it *Qibla-gah*[2] of the world and caused for it a unique and undying attraction in the hearts. It draws people from all parts of the world like a magnet. They flock to it with rare enthusiasm and reverence and make a offering of their heart and soul to it. It is free from external adornments and artificial decorations and it is situated at a place which is removed from the broad stream of life and the din and clang of civilisation. Yet there is something about it which is overwhelming, irresistible.

When the house was ready, a voice came from the Great

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1. Denoting the community of the faithful.
2. The place one turns to when at prayer.

Beyond. It spoke :

> And proclaim unto mankind the Pilgrimage. They will come unto thee on foot and on every lean camel ; they will come from every deep ravine. That they may witness things that are of benefit to them, and mention the name of Allah on appointed days over the beast of cattle that He hath bestowed upon them. Then eat thereof and feed therewith the poor and the destitute. Then let them make an end of their unkemptness and pay their vows and go around the ancient House.
>
> (—xxii : 27-29)

At the time of Hazrat Ibrahim the world was a slave to the operation of the law of cause and effect and people had begun to place an excessive reliance on material aids and resources. It was imagined that causes were absolute and independent in themselves, and a new kind of fetishism had come up side by side with traditional idolatry. The life of Hazrat Ibrahim was a revolt against these very 'image-carvers' and 'idol-worshippers'. It was a call to pure Monotheism, to unqualified belief in the Power of God with all its immensity and boundlessness.. It was a declaration of truth that He alone was the Creator of all things, the Prime Mover, the Causer of causes, the real Lord and Master, who, when He pleased, separated the causes from their origins and altered the properties of things. He took away from a thing what was peculiar to it and brought forth from it an effect that was supposed to be dissimilar. He made use of whatever He liked and in whatever way He pleased.

The people had prepared a fire for Hazrat Ibrahim and they cried :

> Burn him and stand by your gods, if ye will be doing anything.
>
> (—xxi : 68)

But Hazrat Ibrahim knew that the fire was subservient to the Will of Allah. To burn was not an absolute characteristic of it which could not be taken away but only a relative attribute that had been placed in it by God as a trust. Its control and

operation lay wholly in His hands who could transform it into a flower-bed in the twinkling of an eye. With this faith and conviction Hazrat Ibrahim jumped into the fire and it turned out to be exactly as he had expected.

> We said : O fire, be coolness and peace for Ibrahim. And they wished to set a snare for him, but We made them the greater losers.
>
> (—xxi : 69-70)

Life was commonly believed to be dependent upon water, field and orchards. People used to be on the look out for regions to make their home that were suitable for themselves as well as for their gods, where there was an abundant supply of water, the soil was rich and facilities for trade and industry were easily obtainable. But Hazrat Ibrahim acted differently. In utter disregard of the biddings of intellect and experience, he chose for his small family of a wife and son a dry and barren valley where not a blade of grass grew and which was also completely cut off from the outside world and separated from the areas of prosperity. On arriving there he prayed to Allah to enlarge the provision of his posterity, to incline the hearts of men towards them and to provide them with all kinds of fruit without any apparent means.

> Our Lord ! Lo ! I have settled some of my posterity in an uncultivable valley near unto Thy Holy House, Our Lord ! that they may establish proper worship ; so incline some hearts of men that they may yearn toward them, and provide Thou them with fruits in order that they may be thankful. (—xiv : 37)

The prayer was granted by Allah, and in what a magnificent manner ! Both peace and sustenance were assured to his succeeding generations and the valley of Mecca was made the home of fruits and His other bounties.

> Have We not established for them a sure sanctuary, whereunto the produce of all kind is brought (in trade), a provision from Our Presence ? But most of them know not. (—xxviii : 57)

So let them worship the Lord of this House (of Ka'aba) Who hath fed them against hunger.

(—cvi : 3-4)

Hazrat Ibrahim had abandoned his family at a place where not a drop of water was to be found but Allah caused a spring to spout forth from the parched, stony land. Water began to gush, from the sand, all by itself, and, even to this day, it has been going on like that, without an interruption. People drink it and take it home in barrels. He had left his wife and son in a desolate and uninhabited valley but soon it began to hum with people drawn from every nook and corner of the world.

Hazrat Ibrahim's life was a challenge to the exaggerated materialism and blind submission to the law of cause and effect of his age, and an affirmation of faith in the Omnipotence and All-powerfulness of God—and it is the unchanging practice of the Lord that He makes means and resources subordinate to faith and produces results from them as are outside the range of human understanding.

Renewal of the Call of Hazrat Ibrahim

The *Haj* along with its rituals and the events to which these are related, the robe of indifference to material phenomena and liberation from conciet and vainglory which the pilgrim puts on and the rites of *Waqoof*,[1] *Ifaza*,[2] *Rajm*,[3] *Sa'ee* ; and *Tawaf* he performs are, in fact, a means to the promotion and activisation in his life of the values and concepts of Monotheism, negation of material causes, reliance on God, Divine propitiation and making sacrifices in His way. All these events, formalities and observances typify an open rejection of customary behaviour and a revival of the spirit of faith, love and surrender. The *Haj* holds a guarantee to the preservation of these lofty ideals, sublime

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1. The stay at Arafat between the Mid-day of the 9th and the early hours of the 10th of Zil-Hijja.
2. Return to Mecca from Mina.
3. The throwing of pebbles at the Jemaras.

sentiments and priceless moral and spiritual values and of the unmatched Islamic conception of human equality and brotherhood which transcends all national, political and geographical barriers. It is a call for following the example of Hazrat Ibrahim, for producing the spirit of his faith and devotion in ourselves and for holding aloft his teachings everywhere and at all times

> The faith of your father Ibrahim is yours. He hath named you Muslims of old time and in this Scripture, that the Messenger may be a witness against you, and that you may be witnesses against mankind. So establish worship, pay the poor-due, and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protecting Friend. A blessed Patron and a blessed Helper !
>
> (—xxii : 78)

A New Chapter

The call of Hazrat Ibrahim marks the beginning of a new chapter in the story of our race. It draws a line of separation between one current of history and another. The whole of mankind gets divided into two camps that remain permanently in a state of war with each-other. With it the old era ends and the new begins. Hazrat Ibrahim was favoured by God with an eternal call and an everlasting *Ummat* and Apostleship : spiritual guidance and religious leadership were, forever, decreed for his descendants. For his followers it was ordained for all times that they will shoulder the responsibility of carrying out the struggle against the forces of evil and perform the task of the preaching and propagation of faith. The duty of guiding humanity to its ultimate destination and protecting the light of faith against the onslaughts of darkness and sensuality was now going to be theirs.

Hope of Humanity

The *Haj* pilgrimage, the annual congregation of the followers of Hazrat Ibrahim at Mecca, and the rites and ceremonies connected with it possess in full measure the capacity to forge a living contact among his spiritual heirs and successors and impart

a new life to the aims and ideals indicated above.

> Allah hath appointed the Ka'aba, the Sacred House, a standard for mankind, and the Sacred Month and the offerings and the animals with straps around their necks. This is so that ye may know that Allah knoweth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, and Allah is Knower of all things.
>
> (—v : 97)

Eternal Home of Religious Guidance and Endeavour

During the Islamic era and the ministry of Prophet Mohammad the House of Allah in Mecca, where the rites of the *Haj* are performed, became a permanent home of religious guidance and true spirituality. Here the cold cellar of the heart is warmed up again, and the World of Islam rallies to it, year after year, to pay the tribute of love and submission and give a marvellous demonstration of its attachment to this pillar of faith. The greatest of rulers, plutocrats, scholars and divines walk around it in an exalted state of feeling but not unbounded by reason and awareness. They furnish a practical proof of the fact that they are united in spite of the things that apparently divide them, bound to each-other in spite of mutual strifes and dissensions and strong in spite of widespread poverty and backwardness. Though the Muslims are scattered all over the world and engrossed in their own problems and difficulties and divided into various races and nationalities they become one at a particular point where all their divergences, strifes and contentions disappear and they are moulded into a compact whole. Their life, in the pilgrimage, consists wholly of faith and belief, worship and oblation and *Tawaf* and *Sa'ee*, and their only halts are at Mina and Arafat and at such other places where the rites of the *Haj* are performed. They ere constantly on the move, advancing towards their goal, meeting new people traversing new paths and discovering new dimensions. The journey within journey continues till they depart from the world and go to meet their Maker.

Town of the Beloved

It is natural for a Muslim, specially if he has come from a distant land, to want to go to Madina, after he has completed the *Haj*, which had been the home of the sacred Prophet after Migration and where his last resting place lies. Simply and sincerely, he is seized with the longing to betake himself to it and see the hallowed mosque from which emanated the rays of light that illumined the world and flowed out the springs of knowledge and spirituality which transformed it into a blooming garden. It was here that Islam took shelter in the days of tyranny and oppression and the initial chapters of its history were written. The soil of this wonderful city is soaked with the blood and tears of the holy Companions. It is but to be expected of the pilgrim that he desired keenly to offer prayers in the Mosque of the Prophet, one *Rak'at* of which is equal to a thousand *Rak'ats* offered elswhere[1], and to stay at places where the pious precursors, the martyrs and the truthful used to say. He is hopeful of receiving from there some part of the celestial wealth of faith, earnestness and love and of the courage to lay down his life in the cause of Islam. He is also inspired by the wish to send blessings on the holy Prophet through whom he was fortunate enough to obtain deliverance from Ignorance, to pass from the bondage of fellow-men to the bondage of God and to taste the sweetness of faith and realise the worth and dignity of man.

Protection against Pollution and Distortion

The *Haj* plays a vital role in the protection of the spiritual roots of the *Muslim Millet*. Nothing is more efficacious in keeping the Islamic faith safe from pollution, confussion and distortion and the *Ummat* bound to its moorings and in dispelling the deceptions and subverting the conspiracies (which have led to the ruination of many a community in the past) than this

1. It is related by Abu Huraira that the Prophet once said "A *Rak'at* of *Salat* in my mosque is equal to a thousand *Rak'ats* offered in any other mosque, save *Masjid-i-Haram* (the Grand Mosque of Mecca)."

annual congregation. Thanks to it, and the rites and formalities that are peculiar to it, the *Muslim Millet*, on the whole, is still inspired by the ideals associated with Hazrat Ibrahim (and which can be described as simplicity, profundity, uprightness, fidelity, tenderness, love and dedication) and has kept alive the tradition of passing on its legacy to the future generations. In this way it is like a throbbing, pulsating heart which is incessantly supplying new blood to the veins and arteries of *Ummat*. The *Haj* affords an excellent opportunity of self-examination to the Muslims. They can test themselves on the anvil of the Ibrahimi origin and their leaders and reformers can take advantage of this unique combination of circumstances to purge them of the corrupting influence of the hypocrites, deceivers and extremists. Through it the *Millet* can safeguard its religious, cultural and intellectual indentity and ward off the challenges of narrow nationalism and parochialism that are inimical to the fundamental spirit of Islam and destructive of the organic unity of the spiritual heirs and successors of Hazrat Ibrahim.

The Muslims live under different conditions in different parts of the world. They pass through diverse phases of existence like activity and stagnation, affluence and want, peace and turmoil and ease and difficulty. Sometimes, they are plagued with problems relating to culture and civilisation, and, sometimes, political material considerations put them on trial. At one place the government under which they live is progressive and benevolent, at another it is reactionary and despotic. But whatever the circumstances, the need is always there for the spark of faith in them to be stirred, the sentiment of love to be aroused and the lesson of unity and self-sacrifice to be imparted. God has made the *Haj* a springtime in which the ever-green tree of the *Ummat* sends forth new blossoms and the universal fraternity of Islam re-asserts itself.

In the words of Hazrat Shah Waliullah: "Just as for the government it is necessary to hold a periodical survey so that it can be known who is loyal and who is disloyal and who is a conscientious worker and who is a shirker, and also that through

it, its power and authority may increase and the people and officials come close to each other the *Ummat*, too, stands in need of the *Haj* in order that the truthful may be separated from the hypocrites and people may come in ranks to the *durbar*[1] of Allah; they may know each-other and profit from each-other's company for better and more desirable things are generally acquired by knowing and associating with one another.

"Since the *Haj* is an occasion on which people come together it serves as an effective protection against sinful customs and practices. Nothing can compare with it where recalling the state of the leaders and mentors of the *Ummat* and engendering the urge for emulating their example are concerned."[2]

At another place the distinguished scholar remarks,[3] "Included among the objects of the *Haj* is the one for which governments hold fairs and exhibitions. People come from far and near to see them, they meet one another and learn about the precepts of their State and pay their respects to its hollowed places. In the same way, the *Haj* is the fair or exhibition of Muslims in which a display of their glory is made, their energies are pooled together and the name of their community shines in the world. It is stated in the Quran :

> And (remember) when We made the House (for Ka'aba, a resort for mankind and a place of refuge."
>
> (—ii : 125)

Centre of Universal Guidance

It is the Will of Allah that even at most critical times of the *Haj* will not be without the presence of the blessed personalities we speak of as 'doctors of divinity', 'favourities of the Divine Court', 'people of preaching and reform', and 'men of the inner world'. It is on account of their participation that the atmosphere surrounding the Pilgrimage gets so overwhelmingly charged with radiance and spirituality that even the hardest of the

1. The place where formal gatherings are held by a sovereign.
2. *Hujjātiullah*, Vol. I, pp. 59-60
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 42

hearts melt, the rebels and renegades are inclined to be repentant, the eyes that had never been moist with love or fear of God are flooded with tears, the cold furnaces of the hearts are lit up once again, the Mercy of the Lord descends from the heavens, the feeling of peace and tranquillity permeates the entire congregation and the Devil finds no place to hide his head. It is stated in the Traditions that "the Devil has never been seen more miserable, angry and downcast than on the Day of *Arafa* and it is so because he sees with his own eyes that the Mercy of the Lord is descending upon the earth and grievous sins are being forgiven."

There is an indescribable quality about the spiritual climate of the *Haj*. Muslims coming from far away places experience an extraordinary awakening of the heart and they take back with them a provision of faith, love and enlightenment which sustains them and enables them to resist the pressures of fear, gread and lust. On their return they also share it with brothers who could not make the Pilgrimage owing to poverty, illness or any other valid reason and this wealth of religious feeling and awareness, thus gains currency in the entire Islamic society, the illiterate and the unknowing feel encouraged to acquire the knowledge of faith, the weak and the downtrodden draw inspiration from it, the spirits of the dejected and the heart-sick are revived and the *Ummat* acquires a new strength to carry out the duty of preaching and guidance.

Demonstration of Islamic Equality and Fraternity

The *Haj* is a victory for Islamic nationalism over racial, linguistic or territorial nationalism for which a large number of Muslim countries also have, unfortunately, fallen. It is a proclamation as well as a most impressive manifestation of Islamic nationalism. On reaching there the Muslims cast away their national or local garments which differentiate them from one another and to which some of them have become attached to the extent of being clannish and parcchial, and put on the national robe of Islam, called *Ihram*, and they all sing the same song of

humbleness and submission.

> O God ! Here I am ! Here I am in Thy presence ! Thou hast no partner ! Here I am ! All praise is for Thee and from Thee are all blessings ! To Thee alone belongs Power and Rule ! Thou art without partner !

The rulers and the ruled, the masters and the slaves the rich and the poor, the high and the low—all become one. The distinctions of class, race and geography lose their validity in their midst. The nationality of Islam transcends their whole existence. It is apparent from their apparel as well as their watchword. It is the same with all the other formalities, prayers and rituals of the *Haj* in which people belonging to different lands and nationalities join one another and all things that separate the near from the remote, the Arab from the non-Arab, disappear at a single stroke into oblivion. They run together between the two hills of Safa and Marwa, travel together to Mina, betake themselves together to Arafat, pray together at *Jabal-i-Rahmat* (the Mount of Mercy) and spends the night together at Muzdalifa.

> Then, when you pass on in the multitude from Arafat, remember Allah by the sacred monument. Remember Him as He hath guided you, although before ye were of those astray.
>
> (—ii : 198)

They come back together, move together and halt together.

> Then hasten onward from the place whence the multitude hasteneth onward, and ask for forgiveness of Allah. Lo ! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.
>
> (—ii : 199)

They stay at Mina in a body and perform the rites of *Naher* (sacrificing of animals), *Halq* (shaving of the head) and *Rami* (throwing pebbles) in each other's company.

As long as the *Haj* endures (and *Insha Allah* it will endure till the end of time) the cult of nationalism and other un-Islamic movements shall not succeed in swallowing up the Muslims.

The Muslims will never give in to them, and in their countries (to which they are naturally attached) no other Ka'aba will, at any time, be set up which took the place of the *Haj* and became the centre of attraction for the whole of Muslims. The *Qibla* shall always remain one to which the Muslims of the East and the West will turn their faces. So also will the House of Allah be forever one to which the Indian and the Afghan and the European and the American Muslims will be coming for the *Haj* Pilgrimage year after year.

> And (Remember) when We made the House (of Ka'aba) a resort for mankind and a place of refuge, saying: Take as your place of worship the place where Ibrahim stood to pray.
>
> (—ii : 125)

Benefits

The *Haj* has many other benefits, some of which are known to us and some are not. Perhaps the benefits we do not know are more numerous than those we know. Eminent scholars of Islam have drawn attention to the benefits of the *Haj* that are hidden from our view. A verse of *Sura-i-Haj* of the Qu'ran reads :

> That they may get together for things that are of benefit to them.
>
> (—xxii : 28)

Here the word *Manafe* (of benefit) has been used in a general sense, ostensibily with the object of indicating the abundance of the advantages accruing from the *Haj* and their different categories and phases at different periods of time.[1]

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1. The *Haj* is an occasion on which the Muslims from all over the world come together and avail themselves of the things that are of benefit to them in various ways. They can take advantage of it to meet each other and discuss their problems. But this is not the real significance of the *Haj* as some of the present-day writers try to show. The *Haj* is not in the nature of a political conference whatever these self-appointed

(Continued on the next page)

The City of Peace should present a True Picture of the Islamic way of Life

The *Haj* is an annual congregation in which the Muslim from all parts of the world participate. They collect in one place, on a single platform, with a definite aim and conviction, and in a rare religious and spiritual atmosphere, and, from it, they draw fresh strength and gain new inspiration. It gives them a splendid opportunity to remove the faults that may have crept into their beliefs and practices under the influence of alien ideologies and un-Islamic civilisations or as a result of imitating the ways of life pursued in the neighbouring countries, and to acquire the knowledge and awareness of faith from the 'fountain of purity' which is eternally protected against pollution and

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[*Continued from page* 253)

exponents of Islam may say. Were it so, the *Haj* would be held in a peaceful atmosphere with all the pilgrims staying at one place. This, naturally, would have facilitated the holding of deliberations. But the rites of the Pilgrimage are such that the *Hajis* have always to be on the move and there is little opportunity for them to sit together and confer. Moreover, had the *Haj* really been intended to be something of a Muslim conference on international affairs it would have been open only to leaders of Muslim opinion in various countries or, at least, special stress would have been laid on their presence while, in fact, it has been made obligatory for every Muslim, man or woman, who possesses the means to make the Pilgrimage, and the obligation hold good for only once in a lifetime. It is not that a worldly advantage can or should not be derived from the *Haj* but that does not form a part of its fundamental aim and purpose. The Qur'an says :

> Pilgrimage to the House (of Allah) is a duty men owe to God—those who can afford the journey, but if any deny faith God stand not in need of any of His creatures.
>
> (—iii : 97)

A Tradition of the Prophet read : "A person whom God has given enough to perform the *Haj*, if he fails to do so then it does not matter whether he dies a Jew or a Christian."

If the *Haj* was to be an International Islamic Conference its form and design would have been different and it would also not be held at such a remote and barren place.

defilement. It is, therefore, essential both logically and from the point of view of the spirit of Islam and the *Haj* that the City of Peace (i. e., Mecca) with which the whole of the Pilgrimage is associated preserved the heritage of the Islamic programme of life in all its aspects and presented such a picture of it that pilgrims were able to appreciate its distinctiveness and to live through it, however brief their stay might be, as a reality. God has made the blessed city of Mecca the seat of the *Haj* and the place of refuge for all Muslims. They come here with the impression that it is the spiritual capital of Islam and the spring-head of sanctity. On coming here an ordinary Muslim who lives far away from the nerve-centre of Islam regards everything related to it to be authentic. Whatever he sees or hears is to him the last word in correctness and propriety for the simple reason that in the eyes of the common Muslim the conduct of no one can be more in keeping with the standard of Islam than that of the people of Mecca and Medina. It could simply be no other way because the followers of every religion or civilisation look to its place of origin or spiritual or cultural headquarters for inspiration, and believe what obtains there to be the measuring yard of excellence. Thus the lexicon of the Quraish is considered to be of the highest merit in Arabia, and next to it is the language of the bedouin which sets the pattern for the idiom, pronunciation and mode of expression among the Arabs. Similarly, the conduct of the people of Medina was regarded as decisive in the Maliki school of Jurisprudence and during the heyday of Spain the behaviour of the inhabitants of Cordova was held to be the standard of perfection by the jurists of the West. People, indeed, have always been in the habit of imagining the capitals of their countries to be the citadels of culture. They vie with each other in following the trends set over there in dress and other fields of personal and social behavior. It is, therefore, a most disconcerting experience for Muslim religious teachers when pilgrims returning from the Seat of Islam tell them that what they had seen there was quite different from

what they had been preaching.[1]

Distinctiveness

What is more important is that Mecca (the City of Peace) should in all circumstances uphold the standards of simplicity and austerity that brought the pilgrims closer to the social and spiritual climate in which the Muslims of the earliest centuries of Islam performed the *Haj*. On entering it, they should feel that they had stepped into a new world and were living in entirely different surroundings. This will inspire them to cast away the shadow of their past existence and imbibe new values. They will, then, derive a rare spiritual satisfaction from their stay in that blessed town which they could never feel in their own homeland. On the other hand, if the House of Ka'aba or the *Haram Sharif*[2] remained true to their original state but their surroundings underwent a radical change and the town of Mecca and its neighbouring areas began to look like a part of Europe or America and the Western Civilisation, with all its virtues and vices, swept over it and the *Haji*, who in the *Shariat* is described as 'the dishevelled and the dust-laden', set about to enjoy thoroughly the luxuries of the modern age and lead a life of ease and comfort he will not be able to feel the full moral and spiritual impact of the Pilgrimage.

The *Haj*, because of it, has been described as a kind of *Jehad*. It is related by Hazrat Ayesha that the Prophet once said, "The best and most superior *Jehad* is the *Haj* which finds acceptance (with God)." It is also related by her that once she said to the Prophet that when *Jehad* was regarded to be a superior act why should they not engage in it (instead of performing the *Haj*)? The Prophet replied, "But a better kind of *Jehad* is the *Haj* on which there is the favour of the Lord." Another

1. The above passage is an abridgement of the speech delivered by the author at the Annual Conference of *Rabita-I-'Alam-i-Islami* held at Mecca in 1964.
2. The sacred enclosure of Mecca.

Tradition related by Hazrat Omar reads, "Make preparations for the *Haj* for it, too, is *Jehad*".

If, therefore, Mecca itself changes beyond recognition and accepts blindly the influence of the Western Civilisation and the various modern contrivances of comfort and luxury are freely made available during the *Haj* the Pilgrims will naturally be haunted by a sense of spiritual vacuum and a clear decline in the benefits of the *Haj* will take place on all sides.

Provisions of the Shariat

The holy law has provided the *Haj* with an environment which is basically conducive to self-realisation and inner upliftment. It has encompassed it with worship and endowed it with sanctity and spirituality. The journey of the *Haj*, for most people, is long and tedious. In it they have to pass through many lands and undergo diverse experiences. Temptations beset their path, business worries and other vexations tax their minds ; they stop at strange places and come into contact with all sorts of people. Sometimes, they are also accompanied by their families which often proves to be an additional distraction. All these things can undermine the spirit of devotion and endeavour which holds the key to the blessedness of the *Haj*. There was, thus, not an inconsiderable danger of the *Haj* Pilgrimage getting reduced to another journey with the Pilgrims going out as tourists and returning home empty-handed.

As a safeguard against it the *Shariat* has given to the *Haj* a colour of sanctity and sublimity that never fades. It has provided it with a built-in mechanism that allows neither neglect nor apathy nor any other vain or frivolous element to enter into it and ruin its beauty. The *Shariat* has laid down wise and comprehensive rules for the *Haj* which strengthen its hold on life and ensure its continuance as a most important means of correction and reform and gaining access to God. To begin with, it has declared it to be the fourth fundamental duty in Islam and made it obligatory for all Muslims who fulfil certain conditions.

Pilgrimage to the House (of Allah) is a duty men

> owe to God—those who can afford the journey. but if any deny faith God stands not in need of any His creatures.
>
> (—iii : 97)

It is related by Hızrat Ali that the Prophet once said, "A person whom God has given enough to perform the *Haj* if he fails to do so then it deos not matter whether he dies a Jew or a Christian." Another Tradition of the holy Prophet reads, "The foundation of Islam rests on these five pillars : The affirmation that there is no God save one God and Mohammad is His Apostle, the establishment of *Salat*, the payment of *Zakat*, the observance of *Saum* in the month of *Ramadhan* and the performance of the *Haj* by those who can afford to make the Pilgrimage."

In the Traditions the virtues of the *Haj* and the high place it occupies in the sight of God have been stressed over and over again with the object of arousing the sentiments of faith and eagerness because unless these two sentiments are associated with an act and it is motivated primarily by them God has no use for it. It is related by Hazrat Abu Huraira that the Prophet once said, "The reward for a pure and untainted *Haj* is Paradise itself and nothing short of it." In another Tradition related by him it is said that "he who performs the *Haj* and commits no lustful act during it, and does not disobey God (in any other way), he will return from it as pure and sinless as he was at the time of his birth ." Yet another Tradition of the holy Prophet reads, "Perform the *Haj* and the *Umra* for they both remove the sins in the same way as the furnace removes the impurities of gold, silver and iron, and there is no lesser recompense on a pure and untainted *Haj* than Paradise, and when a believer puts on the *Ihram* all his sins disappear with the setting of the sun." It is, further, related by Hazrat Ayesha that the Prophet once said : "On no other day does God release so many of His slaves from the torment of Hell as on the day of *Arafa*."[1]

1. *Muslim.*

Once it was enquired from the Prophet which was the most excellent of acts. He replied, "The affirmation of faith in God and His Apostle." He was asked what was next to it, and he said, "*Jehad* in the way of Allah." On being asked what came after it, the Prophet replied, "Pure and untainted *Haj*."[1]

Included among the wise and far-reaching regulations governing the *Haj* pilgrimage is the determination of *Miquats*[2] which fulfils the purpose of imparting a new consciousness to the pilgrim and producing a kind of mental and spiritual awakening in him. He begins to feel that he is approaching an *Imperial durbar* and has entered its sanctified precincts. But for it, the pilgrims would reach the House of Allah without being psychologically prepared for the event like the uncultured rustics who intrude into the courts of kings and noblemen only to be thrown out unceremoniously.

Commenting on the significance of *Mawaquit*[3] Hazrat Shah Waliullah writes: "The real idea behind the determination of *Mawaquit* is that while, on the one hand, it is enjoined upon the pilgrims to present themselves in Mecca with their hair dishevelled and in a distressed condition, on the other, there is an open difficulty for them in setting forth from their homes with the *Ihram* wrapped round their bodies—some of whom have to do a month or two of travelling, or even more—some special places have been marked on all sides of Mecca on crossing which it is necessary to put on the *Ihram*. Care has been taken that these places are well known as points of transit. The *Miquat* for people coming from Medina (i. e., Zul-Hulaifa) is at the farthest distance. It is so because Medina is the centre of Divine Revelation, the citadel of faith, the home of Migration and the first city to embrace Islam at the Call of Allah and the

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1. Muslim
2. *Miquats* are places marked out on the different sides of the city of Mecca on reaching which a pilgrim coming for the *Haj* or *Umra* from a place lying beyond them is required to put on the pilgrim's robe of *Ihram*.
3. Plural of *Miquat*.

Apostle. The people of Medina, as such, have a greater claim to be in the vanguard of those who strive in the path of Allah and ahead of everyone in worship. As against Jawatha, Taif and Yamama, Medina is counted among the earliest towns to have entered into the fold of Islam and given proof of single-minded devotion to faith. There is, therefore, no harm if the *Miquat* for it has been fixed so far away."[1]

The Pilgrim's robe of *Ihram* is meant to attune him spiritually to the sublimity of his mission. It brings about in the pilgrim the realisation that he is going on an important errand and presenting himself in the holiest of courts. There is also a complete freedom in it from ostentation. In this way, *Ihram* occupies the same place in the *Haj* as *Takbir*[2] does in *Salat* which takes the worshipper into a new spiritual climate and puts him in a special kind of bondage by taking away his freedom for the time being :

Observes Hazrat Shah Waliullah :

"*Ihram* which is worn in the *Haj* and *Umra* is like the *Takbir* of *Salat*. It is a symbol of believer's faith, sincerity and endeavour. Its purpose is to make the self lowly before God, to make it bow down before Him in submission and to serve as an expression of anguish, distress and suffering for His sake."[3]

A definite method has also been prescribed for coming out of the state of *Ihram* and the discipline that goes with it. It is not that the pilgrim takes off the *Ihram* all of a sudden and begins to enjoy all the things that were prohibited till then. He does so with a precise formulation of intention (*Niyat*) and in accordance with a definite procedure. Just as a person comes out of the state of *Salat* by means of *Salam* (Salutation) he divests himself of *Ihram* through *Hulq* (shaving of the hair). As Hazrat Shah Waliullah explains, "The significance of *Hulq* is that by it

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1. *Hujjatullah*, Vol. II, p. 44
2. The Formula of *Allah-o-Akbar* recited at the commencement of *Namaz* (Salat).
3. *Hujjatullah*, Vol. II, p. 44

a method of coming out of the state of *Ihram* is determined which is not opposed to dignity. If people were left to their own judgement every one would be acting the way he liked. Besides, it marks the termination of the state of dishevelment that was desired earlier. It is like the turning of the face (*Salam*) in *Salat*".[1]

Talbia, again, forms a part of the plan designed to enhance the efficacy of the *Haj*. The *Shariat* has stressed its importance and the holy Prophet also has said that it is preferable to utter it in a loud and full-throated manner. On being asked which *Haj* was of a higher order he is reported to have remarked, "The one in which *Talbia* is recited forcefully and the animals are offered in sacrifice properly"[2].

The *Talbia* has an important role to play in stirring up the inner self of the pilgrim, in enkindling the flame of love, devotion and eagerness within him and in arousing in him the desire to beg, beseech and rub his forehead on the ground in the holy precincts of the House of Allah. As the pilgrim utters it a wave of faith and spirituality surges through his entire existence. It equips him emotionally for the great event and, thus, removes the deficiency from which he is generally inclined to suffer owing to pre-occupation with the mundane things of life. When he raises the heart-warming cry of *Here I am : O God, Here I am in Thy Presence : Thou art without a partner : All Praise is for Thee, and from Thee are all Blessings ! To Thee belongs all Power (and Rule) : Thou hast no partner*, the inherent meaning and significance of the *Haj* dawns upon him in its full lustre and solemnity, he is seized with joy and excitement, the cup of love overflows and the flame of Monotheism runs through the depths of his being ; he feels restless and a genuine mental and spiritual affinity between him and Hazrat Ibrahim, the sacred Prophet, his Companions and the bearers of his message is created and he becomes one with them.

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1. *Hujjat*, Vol. II. p. 45
2. *Ibn-i-Maja*

Sanctity of Time and Space

God has bestowed two special 'sanctities' upon the *Haj*, the sanctity of time and the sanctity of space, due to which the pilgrim remains alive to the grandeur of the occasion and the solemnity of his own responsibility. He is zealously vigilant in his conduct and never becomes neglectful of the unique spiritual atmosphere surrounding the Pilgrimage.

In the Quran it is set forth that :

> Lo ! the number of the months with Allah is twelve months by Allah's ordinance in the day that He created the heavens and the earth. Four of them are sacred : that is the right religion. So wrong not yourselves in them.
>
> (—ix : 36)

And also that :

> They question thee (O Mohammed) with regard to warfare in the sacred month. Say : Warfare therein is a great transgression (—ii : 217)

It is related that the Prophet once said, "Verily, Time has returned to its original state—as it was on the day on which God created the heavens and the earth. Four months are sacred in it : Zi-Quad, Zil-Hijja, Moharrum and Rajab".[1]

As for the sanctity of space, we read the following in the Quran :

> Say (O Mohammad) I am commanded only to serve the Lord of this Land which He hath hallowed, and unto Whom all things belong. And I am commanded to be of those who surrender (to Him).
>
> (—xxvii : 91)

It is related by Ibn-i-Abbas that the Prophet said on the occasion of the victory of Mecca, "Migration has ceased from today but *Jehad* and *Niyat* remain. Start out at once when you are called up for faith." He also remarked, "God has granted sanctity to this town from the day on which He created the heavens and the earth. This sacredness will endure till the end of

1. *Muslim*

the world. Even before me warfare was prohibited in it and to me also it has been allowed only for a short time of the day. Now it is forbidden, with the sanctity of Allah, till the Last Day. In it, neither a thorn can be plucked nor a straw broken nor a bird or animal driven for game nor an article dropped (by any one) picked up." Upon it, Abbas enquired, "O Prophet of God! Can *Izkhir*[1] also not be pulled out (which was often needed by the people)?" The Prophet replied, "Of course, with the exception of *Izkhir*."

To commit a sin within the bounds of *Haram*[2] is, in any case, a grevious matter. But, according to some doctors even the intention to commit a sin in it is an offence and, in their support, they cite the following verse of the Quran :

> Whosoever intendeth wrongful partiality in it, him We shall punish with a painful doom.
>
> (—xxii : 25)

Ibn-i-Katheer, for instance, asserts that "the distinction of the *Haram* is that here even a person who thinks of committing a sin is liable to be called to account and punished no matter whether he carries it into action or not."

With the sanctity of time and space, a number of special regulations have been prescribed for the sanctity of *Ihram* as well. Hunting, for example, is forbidden to one who is in the state of wearing it. Says the Quran :

> O ye who believe ! Kill no wild game while ye are in the state of *Ihram*
>
> (—v : 95)

> To hunt and to eat the fish of the sea is made lawful for you, a provision for you and for sea-farers ; but to hunt on land is forbidden to you so long as ye are in the state of *Ihram*. Be mindful of your duty to Allah, unto Whom ye will be gathered. (—v : 96)

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1. A kind of aromatic grass
2. The city of Mecca along with a certain outlying territory on all sides is called *Haram*.

To quote from Hazrat Shah Waliullah's *Hujjatullah-ul-Baligha*: "These things are forbidden to the pilgrim who is wearing the *Ihram* so that he attained the state of humbleness, renouncement of ostentation and dishevelment and unkemptness, the reverent fear of God and of His punishment became dominant in him and he was not caught in the web of (worldly) desires and interests. Hunting has been included among the prohibited things because it also falls within the sphere of self-indulgence and is a kind of entertainment."[1]

For many a pilgrim the journey of the *Haj* is a long one, taking a lot of time.

> And proclaim unto mankind the Pilgrimage. They will come unto thee on foot and also on lean camel; they will come from every deep ravine.
>
> (—xxii; 27)

During the journey the pilgrim passes through various experiences. He comes into contact with different people and has to live among strangers for days and weeks. In it situations can arise that tested his patience and made him irritable. He can be provoked to be quarrelsome or incited to commit other misdeeds. Often he is inclined to be petty and mean and to behave in a manner considered disgraceful even at home. Sometimes, he is guilty of a moral indiscretion which is plainly injurious to the spirit of his mission. All such things have been particularly forbidden to the pilgrim since there was a greater likelihood of their occurrence during the *Haj*.

> The Pilgrimage is in the well-known months, and whoever is minded to perform the Pilgrimage therein (let him remember that) there is to be no lewdness or abuse nor angry coversation during the Pilgrimage. And whatsoever good ye do Allah knoweth it. So make provision for yourselves (hereafter); for the best provision is to ward off evil. Therefore, keep your duty unto Me, O men of understanding. (—ii: 197)

1. *Hujjatullah* Vol. II, p. 44

These teachings and regulations (related as they are directly to mind and conscience, deed and intent, and time and space) have vested the *Haj* with a sense of solemnity and self-denial which is wholly its own. The uplifting influence the rites of the *Haj* exert on life and the inclination for self-searching and moral and spiritual restraint and correction they produce in the pilgrim is not equalled by a similar event or observance in any other community. This uniqueness goes to confirm the truth of the celestial Tradition of the Prophet which says : "He who performs the *Haj* and commits no lustful act during it and does not disobey God, (in any other way), will return from it as pure and sinless as he was at the time of his birth."

Farewell Haj

The holy Prophet had not performed the *Haj* since his migration to Medina. He set out for Mecca with the intention of performing the *Haj* in the month of Zil-Hijja in the tenth year of Migration. The whole of Arabia was stirred as the news spread and about a lakh[1] of Muslims thronged to Mecca to join him on the Pilgrimage. This pilgrimage is popularly known as the Farewell *Haj* for it was not only the first but also the last *Haj* performed by the sacred Prophet and in it he bade farewell to his followers and imparted to them his last advice and testament.

The Farewell *Haj* is worthy of being remembered as a portent of Allah and a miracle of the holy Prophet. It is unique in many ways and commands a distinctive place among the acts of religious devotion performed by the Divine Apostles. It is also of unequalled significance in the sense that a vast body of men were afforded the opportunity of associating themeselves with the Prophet, of emulating his example, carrying out his instructions, observing his movements and recording the minutest details of his daily life. From one generation to another, the *Ummat* has striven hard to obtain guidance from it and to evolve

1. Meaning a hundred thousand.

rules on the basis of every single item of what the Prophet said or did during the blessed journey.

The Muslims have spared themselves nothing by way of time or industry in the compilation and preservation of the record of this Pilgrimage. They have brought to bear a rare power of observation and sense of understanding and responsibility to this task. But it has not merely been an intellectual accomplishment for we have enough experience of how important details are left out of biographies and travel-accounts of great men. It is, in fact, a marvel of love, of the tender emotion which is always alive, alert and watchful and to which even a particle of dust bearing an association which the beloved is more precious than gold.

Throughout the long and hallowed journey love remained a close companion of intellect. From the time the Prophet announced his decision to go on Pilgrimage till his return to Medina this fellowship was not broken for a moment. The two kept a close watch on all his sayings and doings and have left behind for the *Ummat* and the succeeding generations a record so complete and accurate that from it a Muslim can know clearly about everything that took place during the whole course of the Pilgrimage—how did the Prophet travel from Medina to Mecca, what happened during his visits to Mina and Arafat, and on his way back to Mecca, and, finally, on his return journey to Medina. In the mirror of it he can see the Prophet talking, preaching and exhorting, doing the *Sa'ee*, performing the *Tawaf* and completing the other rites. Thanks to it, he can participate, intellectually, and spiritually, in all these events and incidents. As a Muslim reads the account of the Farewell *Haj* the invisible becomes the visible for him and the past the present.

From all pointers and attending circumstances this *Haj* of the Prophet was destined to take place the way it did. It was not a chance occurrance but had come to pass designedly and at the most appropriate time. That it materialised so late was not without significance. It was when Islam had spread throughout the Peninsula of Arabia, the number of Muslims had swelled,

faith had grown in strength and love had mellowed, the minds and hearts of men had become receptive and they were willing to learn and imbibe new knowledge, the hour of the Prophet's departure from the world was drawing near and it seemed necessary that he bade farewell to his followers. It was in these circumstances that the holy Prophet undertook the Pilgrimage so that he could meet the Muslims and inform them, for the last time, about the mode and formalities of worship, fulfil his mission as a witness of Allah and take from them the pledge of adherence to the Divine path and the way of the Islamic *Shariat* after he had passed away and demolish the last vestiges of idolatry and paganism. The Farewell *Haj* was, indeed, the equivalent of a thousand sermons and exhortations.

It would be a sheer waste of time to try to find a parallel of the wonderful manner in which the minutest details of the happenings in the entire course of the Farewell Pilgrimage of the Prophet have been preserved in the descriptions of the journeys undertaken by other men of eminence, both temporal and spiritual. The record made available by most of the communities of their Apostles is defective and incomplete. What we know, for example, about the life of Jesus does not, according to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, cover more than fifty days of his career on earth.[1]

Since the *Haj* is performed only once in a year and in view of the promises of an immense reward and forgiveness it carries and the extraordinary preparations that are made for it and hardships borne and the exceptional restrictions that are placed on the pilgrims and the unusual rites that are to be carried out it is essential that one should do one's utmost to learn and perform the *Haj* in the best of manner by following the example of the sacred Prophet and conducting oneself in accordance with the standard set by him. In this lies the primary importance of the Farewell *Haj* and it will continue to serve as the criterion of perfection for Muslims for all time to come.

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1. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. XIII, pp. 16-17

Pilgrimage in Other Religions

There is no religious group or community which may not have its holy shrines and places of pilgrimage. In every faith there are some sacred places to which its followers travel at a certain time and as an act of religious devotion. This is so because it fulfils a great human need and satisfies a basic spiritual urge. Man, as we have said already, is always in the quest of an object through which he can gratify his inborn feelings of love and fidelity. He needs a profound event, a prolonged ceremony through which he can make amends for serious transgressions and obtain release from the stinging reflections of his conscience and the reproach of society. Within him there is a persistent desire for an impressive congregation which may be solely inspired by religious and spiritual motives and free from all other considerations. When we look at history we find that no nation or society has ever been without its shrines or places hallowed by memory where people have got together for offering up oblations and making entreaties to the Almightly (or gods and goddesses of their own creation). In the words of the Quran :

> And for every nation We have appointed a ritual that they mention the name of Allah over the beast of cattle that He hath given them for food : and your God is One God, so, surrender unto Him. And give good tidings (O Mohammad) to the humble.
>
> (—xxii : 34)

> Unto each nation We have given sacred rites which thay are to perform ; so let them not dispute with thee of the matter, but summon those unto thy Lord. Lo ! Thou indeed followest right guidance.
>
> (—xxii : 67)

Excavators and archaeologists have unearthed incontrovertible evidence in support of this contention. History also tells that the institution of pilgrimage has always been present among the various peoples and communities of the world. But it is very difficult to get to the bottom of these rites and obtain

an adequate knowledge of the rules and ceremonies governing them. What we have so far been able to learn is only of a fragmentary and speculative nature on the basis of which no precise picture can be drawn,

The Jewish and Christian faiths are nearest to us in the matter of the pilgrimage. Both of these have seen long stretches of history and enlightenment, and chroniclers, too, have done full justice to them. Even now their adherants make two of the most advanced peoples of the world, culturally, educationally and politically. Ancient monuments and other sacred places in Jerusalem are still the objects of veneration and they have been making a pilgrimage to that eternal city from the days of old. But when we compare it with the Islamic Haj the image of the Jewish or Christian pilgrimage that emerges in the mind is, at least, weak and hazy.

We will now reproduce a summary of what appears about the pilgrimage in Judaism in the tenth volume of the *Jewish Encylopaedia*.[1]

"The piligrimage to Jerusalem. which was called Re'iyah (meaning the appearance) used to take place on one of the three festivals of Passover, Shabn'ot and Sukkot. The Mishnah says that all were under obligation to appear, except minors, women, the blind the aged and the sick. A minor, in this case, was defined as one who was too young to be taken by his father to Jerusalem. According to the Mosaic Law everyone was to take an offering, though the value of it was not fixed. While the appearance of women and infant males was not obligatory, they usually accompanied their husbands and fathers in all public gatherings.

"Gesius Florus, who lived in Jerusalem from 64 to 66 A·D., counted that 256, 500 lambs were sacrificed at the one Passover Festival, and allowing ten persons to one lamb this would make 2,565,000 pilgrims. The Tosefta records that on one occasion 1,200,000 lambs were offered in sacrifice which would make a

1. pp. 35-37

total of 12,000,000 pilgrims. These figures are evidently exaggerated.

"The pilgrimage to Jerusalem did not cease with the destruction of the temple. The Turkish conquest under Salahuddin (1187) secured to the Oriental Jews the privilege of visiting Jerusalem and the sacred places. Among the Eastern Jews, specially those of Babylonia and Kurdistan, it has been the custom from the 14th Century onward to go on pilgrimage at leas once a year, many of them actually walking the whole distance. The era of the Crusades evidently encouraged pilgrimage of Jews from Europe.

"The expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and the consequent settlement of many exiles in Turkish territory largely increased the number of pilgrims. The goal of their journeys was chiefly the tomb of Samuel the Prophet at Ramah where they held annual communions and celebrations.

"The Jews of Palestine complain of the lack of interest on the part of the co-religionists elsewhere as compared with the thousands of Christians who avail themselves of modern opportunities to visit the Holy Land.

"Pilgrimages are made usually on fixed days in the year, called by the Oriental and North African Jews as 'days of Zi'arah'. On such days it is customary to visit the tombs or relics of certain personages who in early or medieval times were famous as kings or Prophets for their holy lives The days of pilgrimage are celebrated by prayers, rejoicings and popular festivals.

"In Jerusalem a crowd of Jews gathers before the western wall of the Temple of Solomon every Friday evening and on the eves of the feast days, as well as on 23 successive days from the eve of the 17th of Tammuz to the 9th of Ab. On the latter date the religious service occurs at midnight."

As for the institution of pilgrimage among the Christians an outline of it is reproduced on the next page from the 10th volume of the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.[1]

1. See '*Pilgrimage*'

"A pilgrimage", says it "is a journey undertaken to visit sacred places, such as, the scenes of our Lord's earthly life in Palestine, the 'threshold of the Apostles' at Rome or the shrines of saints and martyrs.

"It was natural for a Christian to wish to tread again the paths treaden by the Saviour, though the first generations of Christians did not seem to feel as strongly as their successors. From the 3rd Century certainly the sacred places were visited. Many Christians have felt far greater attraction to the scene of their Lord's passion and resurrection than to those of His earthly ministry.

"From the 13th Century pilgrimages to the Holy land, though still frequent, were less numerous than those to Rome. Next after Jerusalem, Rome was the city which drew the largest number of pilgrims. The causes which contributed to the rise of the Papacy made Rome a pilgrim resort; more specially the tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul exalted it into the goal whither Roman Catholics flocked.

"One centre of interest was the catacombs. At first used as burial places, they afterwards became sacred places, hallowed by the bones of martyrs and visited by thousands of pilgrims. The pilgrims have never ceased to visit Rome; the large number of Churches have been continuous sources of attraction."

This was only about a few places of pilgrimage. There is a bewildering abundance of relics, tombs and shrines not only in Palestine but in all the countries inhabited by Jews and Christians. A detailed account of the graves of saints and martyrs and other sacred places is given in the two monumental works we have referred to above. In them the contributors have, further, mentioned the days on which the pilgrimage was to be made and the different rituals that were considered necessary on such occasions.

When one looks at the excessive attachment of the Jewish and Christian peoples (—the 'People of the Books') to shrines and the exaggerated religious fervour with which they undertook long and tedious journeys to them and which had, ultimately,

pushed them into the lap of Polytheism it becomes apparent why the holy Prophet had taken such great pains to put an end to the custom. He was apprehensive of the unholy practices becoming rampant among the torch-bearers of Monotheism and the last of the Divinely ordained communities with which rested the responsibility of lending guidance to mankind till the day of the Last Judgement. He ordered his own grave to be kept free from all Polytheistic ways and performances. It was his chief anxiety during his last illness.

It is related by Hazrat Ayesha and Abdullah-bin-Abbas that "when the Prophet fell ill he would cover his venerable face with the sheet and when he became restless he would cast the sheet away. In this condition he said, "The curse of God be upon the Jews and Christians who have converted the graves of their Prophets into places of performing the prostration. He was, in this way, warning his followers against such customs and practices.".[1]

It is, further, related by Hazrat Abu Huraira that the sacred Prophet once said, "May God destroy the Jews. They have made the graves of their Prophets into places of worship".[2]

It is related by Hazrat Ayesha that once Umm-i-Salma was talking to the Prophet about the Synagogue of Maria she had visited in Abyssinia. She spoke of the paintings she had seen in it. The Prophet, thereupon, remarked, "These are the people who, when a good or pious person died among them, built a temple on his grave. They are the worst of the creatures of Allah."[3]

Yet another Tradition reads: "O Allah: Let my grave not be an idol to which worship may be offered. Allah is severely displeased with those who have made the graves of their Prophets into places of worship".

1. *Bukhari*
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*

The Prophet has forbidden his followers to make a journey specifically with the object of visiting a tomb or shrine. He said, "A journey, with intention and preparation, is permissible only to three mosques *Masjid-Haram*[1], *Masjid-i-Nabwi*[2] and *Masjid-i-Aqsa*".[3]

He has, thus, made the Muslim *Millet* safe against the perverting influence of tombs and shrines which had led many a community into Polytheism and idolatry.

Unfortunately, however, some sections of Muslims failed to abide by the Prophet's advice and went astray although it was what had kept him worried even on the death-bed. They, too, succumbed to the spell of tombs and shrines and began to visit them out of religious devotion covering long distances and undergoing all sorts of difficulties. They took to prostrating themselves before the graves of holy men and making their vows and petitions to them and showing reverential respect in many other ways, as was the habit of the Jews and Christians. The prophecy of the sacred Prophet has been fulfilled to the very letter that "you will wholly go in the same direction as the earlier peoples did. If they will move by a span you, too, will move by a span and if they will move by a cubit you, too, will move by a cubit".[4]

The tombs and shrines (many of which were false and fictitious) not only encroached upon the right of the mosques but, sometimes, also took the place of *Masjid-i-Haram* and the House of Ka'aba. The ignorant and the unknowing began to gather around them in large numbers and soon it gave rise to

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1. At Macca
2. At Medina
3. At Jerusalem
4. It is related by Abu Sa'eed Khudri that the Prophet once said, "You will follow the example of the preceding communities span by span and cubit by cubit so much so that if they will crawl into the hole of a lizard you too will do the same." The Prophet was asked whether by the preceding communities he meant the Jews and Christians. "Who else?" he replied.

the practice of celebrating the *Urs*[1] and holding fairs in commemoration of the death of the holy men with whom these were associated. The condition of these people has been eloquently depicted by Ibn-i-Taimiyah in these words, "The tombs among them are crammed with people while the mosques are empty and deserted."[2]

A traveller going round the Muslim World will witness, from place to place, the depressing spectacle of Polytheistic practices being performed at tombs, shrines and Imambaras (to which large properties are endowed) and dialogues carried on with the religious divines buried in them in a manner most revolting to the spirit of Islam

Among the religions of India, namely, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, there is a profusion of temples and other places of pilgrimage that are held sacred owing to their association with some special incident like the receiving of enlightenment by a saint or holy man or the appearance (according to the belief of their adherents) of a god or goddess in a manner outside of nature. The number of religious fairs and bathing festivals in these communities is very large.

The places of pilgrimage are mostly situated on the banks of River Ganges where tens and thousands of persons collect for a dip in its holy waters. Some of bathing festivals are held once or twice a year and others once in two years. There are also bathing festivals and fairs whose turn comes after many years like the Kumbh Mela at Prayag which is held every twelfth year and attracts millions of pilgrims from all parts of the country. The rituals also vary from one place to another reflecting the conceptual differences of the sects that go to make these communities.

These fairs are tied to mythological lore and legends relating to deeds and relationships of the deities. On seeing them one is

1. An annual festival held at the tombs of religious divines to commemorate their death.
2. *Minhaj-us-Sunnah*, Vol. I, pp. 130-131

amazed at the miracle of the Quran which, at the time of the construction of the House of Ka'aba, took care, first of all, to deal a deathly blow to Polytheism, mythical lore and fairyism in which the rites and ceremonies of Pilgrimage in other communities have got steeped. It says:

> That (is the command). And whoso magnifieth the sacred things of Allah, it will be well for him in the sight of his Lord. The cattle are lawful unto you save that which have been told (to) ycu. So shun the filth of idols, and shun lying speech. Turning unto Allah alone, not ascribing partners unto Him. (—xxii: 30-31)

This was a description, in passing, of the form and formalities of Pilgrimage in some of the leading religions of the world whose adherents run into millions.

Remarks Hazrat Shah Waliullah:[1] "The foundation of Pilgrimage is present in all communities. A place which might be sacred in their eyes as a landmark of God or on account of its association with the deeds, sacrifices and penances of their precursors was needed by all of them so that it could be helpful in reviving the memory of the favourites of the Lord and their achievements. The House of Allah enjoys a preference over such places because clear signs of Allah can be seen there and it was built by Hazrat Ibrahim who is the spiritual progenitor of most of the nations. He built the First House at a barren and deserted place at the command Allah for His worship and the *Haj* Pilgrimage. If, aside of it, anything exists at any place it has definitely got polluted with Polytheism, perversion and innovation".

It is impossible to disagree with what Hazrat Shah Waliullah has said. The following verse of the Quran will come automatically to the mind of anyone who compares the Islamic *Haj* with the Pilgrimage in other faiths.

> Unto each nation have We given sacred rites (of worship and sacrifice) when they are to perform; so let them not dispute with thee of the matter, but summon thou

1. *Hujjat*, Vol. I, p. 59

unto thy Lord. Lo! Thou indeed followest right gudiance.
(—xxii : 67)

Reformative Role of Islam

Islam has also played a reformative role of profound significance in the sphere of Pilgrimage. The Pagans had introduced numerous perverse innovations and rituals in the *Haj* destroying its spirit and doing a tremendous harm to its aims and advantages. Paganish pride, tribal vanity and the discriminatory behaviour of the Quraish were mainly responsible for it. The holy Quran and the *Shariat* put an end to the lamentable state of affairs by doing away with each and every vestige of the days of Ignorance and giving to mankind something the like of which it had never seen before.

During the pre-Islamic days the Quraish did not go to Arafat with other pilgrims but stayed back at *Haram*. They said that they belonged to the family of God and were the custodians of the House of Ka'aba. They, thus, sought to assert the superiority of their position and perpetuate their privileges. Their Paganish pride and tribal arrogance was brought to an end by God and it was enjoined upon them to do as the others did and make the halt at Arafat.

> Then hasten onward from the place whence the multitude hasteneth onward. (—ii : 199)

Hazrat Ayesha relates that the Quraish and those who followed their example halted at Muzdalifa, and they were known as Hums, while the rest of the pilgrims stopped at Arafat. But when Islam came, God commanded His Apostle to proceed to Arafat and make a halt there also, and, then, return with the other pilgrims. This is what is implied in the Quranic verse: *Then hasten onward from the place whence the multitude hasteneth onward.* Ibn-i-Kathir says that Ibn-i-Abbas, Mujahid, Ata, Qatada, Suddi and other theological doctors also are of the same view. Ibn-i-Jareer, too, has related in the same manner and there is a general agreement over it in the *Ummat*.

Like the fairs of Okaz, Zul Majanna and Zul Majaz, the

Haj too, had become an occasion for flourish, pomposity, competition and polemics. It was the habit of the Pagans to be on the look out for opportunities of self-glorification. They made use of every festival and congregation to show themselves off in high feather and to talk about their ancestors in a vainglorious manner. The congregation of Mina was ideally suited for the display of their crude tribal instincts and, hence, it was forbidden by Allah and a better alternative was provided to them.

> And when ye have completed your devotions, then remember Allah as ye remember your ancestors or with a more lively remembrance. (—ii : 200)

It is related by Hazrat Ibn-i-Abbas that "the Pagan Arabs used to compete with each other in vulgar ostentation and self-praise during the season of the *Haj*. They bragged about the chivalry, nobility and hospitality of their ancestors, and related how they fed others, carried their loads and shed rivers of blood for their sake. They had no other occupation than to praise their forefathers. It was at such a time that the Quranic verse was revealed : *Remember Allah as ye remember your ancestors or with a more lively remembrance.*"

With the passage of time the *Haj* had lost much of its purity, simplicity and sanctity and become just another fair in which all sort of games and shows were held and brawls and altercations took place. It all was condemned by God who proclaimed :

> There is to be no lewdness nor abuse nor angry conversation on the Pilgrimage. (—ii : 197)

Ibn-i-Kathir tells that it was related by Abdullah bin Wahab from Maalik that "the occasion for the revelation of the Divine Commandment, *Let there be no angry conversation on the Pilgrimage* was that the Quraish used to stay at Muzdalifa near Mash'ar-i-Haram and they wrangled among themselves. A group of them would say that it was in the right and the other would say that it was in the right. This was the position so far as I know ; but God knows best."

Likewise, when the Pagan Arabs killed the animals as a sacrifice to their gods they placed their flesh before them and

sprinkled their blood on them. Upon it, the following verse of the Quran was revealed:

> Their flesh reaches not Allah, nor their blood:
> (—xxii : 37)

It is related by Ibn-i-Kathir that "the Pagans used to throw the flesh and blood of the sanctified animals at the House of Ka'aba. On seeing it, the holy Companions said to the Prophet that they were more deserving of the gift. At this, the following verse was revealed: *Their flesh reaches not Allah, nor their blood, but the devotion from you reacheth Him.*"

Another custom among the Pagan Arabs was that when they did the *Niyat* for the *Haj* they refrained from going into their houses through the doors as it was considered to be sinful. As long as they remained in the state of *Ihram* they entered into them by scaling the walls. This, too, was prohibited by the Quran which said that there was no virtue in it,

> It is not righteousness that ye go to houses by the backs thereof, but the righteous man is he who wardeth off evil. So go to houses by the gates thereof. (—ii : 189)

Some people avoided taking the wherewithal of the journey with them when they set out on the *Haj* pilgrimage. They thought that it was against the spirit of reliance upon God to take provisions with them. "We are the guest of God", they said, "Why should we take upon ourselves to make arrangements for our meals and other wants?" Yet they felt no disgrace in begging for their requirements on the way. It was supposed to be an act of penance and resignation. This practice, also, was forbidden by God.

> So make provision for yourselves; the best of provision (of course) is to ward off evil. (—ii : 197)

It is related by Ibn-i-Kathir that some people started on the journey in such a condition that they carried no provisions with them and were empty-handed. They would say: "We are going on pilgrimage to the House of God. Will He not feed us?" It was to discourage them that the verse, *So make provision......*, was revealed denoting that the pilgrims should take enough provisions

to meet their needs and save them from stretching a begging hand before others.

Again, the Pagans considered it sinful to engage in trade during the season of the *Haj*, and, thus, a lawful activity was rendered unlawful by them. It is related in *Bukhari* on the authority of Ibn-i-Abbas that in the days of Ignorance the markets of 'Okaz, Zul Majanna and Zul Majaz were famous but trade was forbidden during the season of the Pilgrimage. Upon it, the following verse was revealed :

> It is no sin for you that ye seek the bounty of your Lord by trading. (—ii : 198)

A most abominable custom was that some people performed the circumambulation of the House of Ka'aba naked saying that they could not carry out the ritual dressed in clothes in which they committed sins. The Paganish practice was a standing invitation to lewdness and perversion. Upon it, the following verse was revealed :

> O Children of Adam ! Look to your adornment at every place (or time) of worship. (—vii : 31)

Awfa relates on the authority of Ibn-i-Abbas that "some people did the circumambulation round the House of Ka'aba in nude. To them God sent down the command of *zeenat* (meaning adornment) which signifies a dress that covers the parts of the body that are to be covered and is also seemly and respectable. Ibn-i-Kathir writes that Mujahid, Ata, Ibrahim Nakh'ee, Saeed bin Jubair, Qatada, Suddi, Zahak, Maalik and Zohri have taken the same view of this verse and they all agreed that it was revealed in respect of the Polytheists who used to circumambulate round the House of Ka'aba without wearing any clothes.

In *Bukhari* it is related from Ibn-i-Abbas that "the holy Prophet had directed the delegation he sent under the leadership of Hazrat Abu Bakr a year before the Farewell *Haj* to proclaim on the sacrificial day that after that year no Polytheist was to perform the *Haj* nor could any one carry out the circumambulation of the House of Ka'aba naked."

Some of the Pagan Arabs believed that the ritual of walking

between the hills of Safa and Marwa should not be observed. The following verse was revealed in that connection.

> Lo! (the mountains) As-Safa and Al-Marwa are among the Landmarks of Allah. It is therefore no sin for him who is on Pilgrimage to the House of God or visiteth it (i. e., performs the *Haj* or *Umra*) to go around them.
>
> (—ii : 158)

It is related by Orwa that Once Hazrat Ayesha enquired from him what was meant by the verse, *Lo! the mountains of As-Safa and Al-Marwa are the Landmarks of Allah*............ He replied that it meant that there was no sin in going around the hills of Safa and Marwa. She, thereupon, remarked, "My nephew! You are wrong. Had it meant what you say it would have read : *It is no sin for him who does not go around them.* The verse was revealed in these circumstances that the Ansars, before the dawn of Islam, used to pay reverential homage to the idol of Manat which was installed near Musallah and he who did so regarded the *Tawaf* of Safa and Marwa to be sinful. Later they enquired about it from the Prophet and said that during the days of Ignorance they regarded as incorrect the *Tawaf* of Safa and Marwa. Upon it the verse (quoted above) was revealed". Hazrat Ayesha went on to say that the Prophet then instituted the practice of the *Tawaf* (of Safa and Marwa) which now no one can abrogate. It is related from Mohammad bin Yusuf in *Bukhari* that "I enquired about Safa and Marwa from Anas and he replied that 'earlier we considered it (the *Tawaf* of two hills) to be a sign of Paganism and on the advent of Islam we abandoned it. Thereupon the verse was revealed'."

The Islamic *Shariat*, through these far-reaching changes, restored the magnificent institution of the *Haj* to its pristine glory and now it has been protected and made safe against every kind of pollution and distortion.

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